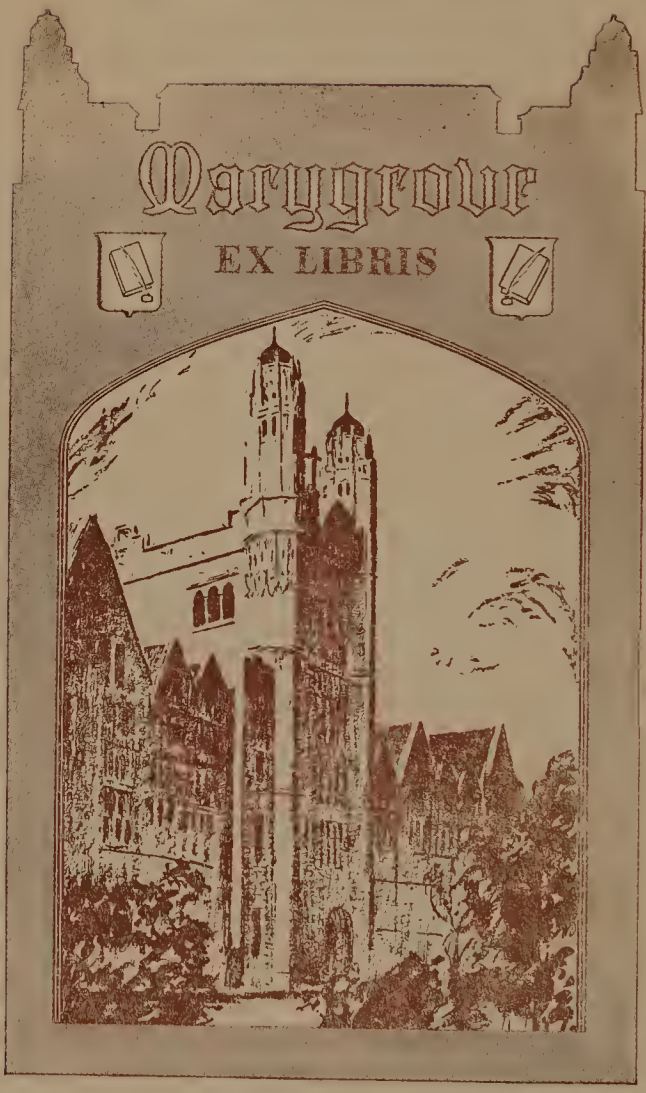
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MUSICAL DRAMA.

VOL. II.

London, Published by Richard Bentley, 1838.

MEMOIRS

OF

THE MUSICAL DRAMA.

BY GEORGE HOGARTH,

AUTHOR OF

"MUSICAL HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY, AND CRITICISM."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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The establishment of the Italian opera in England may be dated from the arrival of Handel, and the

appearance of his first opera, *Rinaldo*, which (as has been mentioned in a previous chapter) took place in 1711. From that time, Italian operas, by him and the most distinguished composers of the day, were regularly performed by complete Italian companies; and such were their attractions, that the English opera, for a time, was almost entirely abandoned.

Rinaldo, though inferior to many of Handel's subsequent operas, was beyond comparison the most masterly work of this description that had been heard in England. The airs are generally antiquated in their form; and the phrases of melody have been so often repeated by subsequent composers, that they now appear hackneyed and common. To imagine their effect when originally produced, it is necessary to keep in view the state of music at that time: and this remark is generally applicable to music of an old date, especially if it is of a melodious and popular kind. One air, however, in this opera, furnishes a remarkable exception;—the air "Furie terribile," sung by Armida. It is a wild burst of passion, full of the force and energy of Gluck, whose style, too, it resembles in its brevity, and the want of the eternal *da capo* of Handel's days. There is an impassioned air in this opera, "Il tricerbero humiliato," which became so popular from Nicolini's singing, that it was adapted to a bacchanalian song beginning "Let the waiter bring clean glasses," and long sung at convivial meetings

throughout the kingdom. In the published music of the opera, the words of this jovial ditty are joined to the air, in addition to the original Italian words! The music (besides the dialogue in recitative) consists entirely of airs, with one duet, and a chorus by way of *finale*, a trivial and flimsy production.

This opera, with repetitions of *Hydaspes* and *Almahide*, and two operas, *Antiochus* and *Hamlet*, both of them written by Apostolo Zeno, and composed by Gasparini, supplied the stage for a couple of seasons. In 1712, another attempt was made to produce an English opera. This was *Calypso and Telemachus*, written by Mr. Hughes, and composed by Mr. Galliard. Mr. Hughes assigned as a reason for this attempt, that "it could never have been the intention of those who first promoted the Italian opera, that it should take entire possession of our stage, to the exclusion of everything of the like kind that could be produced here."—"Though the English language," he further says in his preface, "is not so soft and full of vowels as the Italian, it does not follow that it is therefore incapable of harmony. It is certainly of great importance in dramatic entertainments that they should be performed in a language understood by the audience; and though the airs of an opera may be heard with delight, as instrumental pieces, without words, yet it is impossible that the recitative should give plea-

sure when the words are either taken away or unintelligible."

In pursuance of these views, Mr. Hughes constructed his opera in the Italian form, with the dialogue in recitative. The piece was well written, and the songs possessed of poetical merit. Mr. Galliard, too, was an able composer, and competent to do justice to the music: but, whether from the piece being wanting in interest and dramatic effect, or from the inferiority of the singers, or from the unfitness of the English language for dialogue in recitative, the opera supported but five representations, and these only at intervals. After the third performance, Nicolini appeared in *Antiochus* for the last time previous to his departure for Italy, as was then imagined, for ever. Mr. Addison, in the *Spectator* for June 14th, 1712, says, "I am sorry to find by the opera-bills for this day, that we are likely to lose the greatest performer in dramatic music that is now living, or that perhaps ever appeared upon a stage. I need not acquaint my readers that I am speaking of Signor Nicolini. The town is highly obliged to this excellent artist for having shown us the Italian music in its perfection, as well as for that generous approbation he lately gave to an opera of our own country, in which the composer endeavoured to do justice to the beauty of the words, by following that noble example which has been set him by the greatest foreign

masters in that art."—This little bit of puff seems to have done *Calypso* little good: for, after two performances more, it was finally laid aside.

This opera deserved a better fate, if we may judge from the printed music, which contains a number of beautiful things. Some of the airs are loaded with long divisions, which could have been no objection to them at that time: but others are so graceful and expressive, and in so pure a taste, that they cannot fail to give pleasure at any time. The opening air, "For thee the rilling waters flow," sung by Calypso, is full of tender melancholy, and has some fine descriptive passages in the accompaniments. There is a great deal of passion throughout this part. The opera concludes with an air by Calypso, expressive of her despair at being forsaken, and ending with a burst of grief, "O that Calypso too could die!" The high note sustained for two bars is the very cry of agony, and given by such a singer as Margherita de l'Epine, who performed the part, ought to have produced a powerful effect. The air in the part of Minerva, "See these golden beams," is a noble composition, and would still make an excellent concert song. There are, indeed, many things in this opera which are worthy the attention of our best singers even at this day.

John Ernest Galliard, the composer of this opera, was a native of Zell, and came to England, in the suite of Prince George of Denmark, in the

capacity of a performer on the oboe. He spent the remainder of his life in this country; and, notwithstanding his want of success in the above instance, became a popular composer for the theatres in Lincoln's Inn Fields and Covent-garden. His hunting song, "With early horn," was long in great vogue at the theatres and concerts, and is still well known to the lovers of old English melody. At his last benefit, in 1746, among other compositions of his that were performed, was a piece for twenty-four bassoons and four double-basses. He died in 1749.

In 1714, the celebrated ANASTASIA ROBINSON made her first appearance as a dramatic singer. This lady was the daughter of a portrait painter, of a good family in Leicestershire. She at first learned music as an accomplishment: but her father, being afflicted with a disease in his eyes which terminated in blindness, and, being thus rendered unable to support his family by the exercise of his art, thought of availing himself of his daughter's extraordinary disposition for music, by educating her for it as a profession. She accordingly received instructions in Italian, and in the different branches of music, from the first teachers of the time. Her general improvement was not neglected, and she acquired those accomplishments which add grace and elegance to the female character. To these advantages she added a considerable share of beauty, and a cheerful and engaging disposition; so that she had become a general

favourite in a respectable circle of society, even before her entrance into public life. Her first appearances as a vocalist were at concerts, where she used to accompany herself on the harpsichord. She soon gained the favour of the public, and the countenance and patronage of some persons of high rank; and her father, encouraged by her success, took a house in Golden-square, where he established a weekly concert, or musical *conversazione*, which was much frequented by people of taste and fashion.

Her first appearance at the Italian opera was in an opera called *Creso*, the music of which seems to have been a *pasticcio*, or compilation from the works of various composers of the time. She next appeared, the same season, in *Arminio*, an opera by an anonymous composer. From this period, till the year 1724, she continued to occupy a principal situation at the opera, with increasing reputation and applause. Her salary, Dr. Burney says, was 1000*l.*, and her emoluments by benefits and presents, were estimated at nearly as much more. She quitted the stage, and the exercise of her profession, in consequence of a private marriage with the Earl of Peterborough, who made himself so celebrated by his brilliant exploits at the head of the British troops in Spain during the war of the Succession.

This marriage being then unknown, her retirement from the stage was said to have been occasioned by an insult which she received one evening

from Senesino, and for which he was severely caned on the spot by Lord Peterborough, who was behind the scenes. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, in a letter to the Countess of Mar, written in 1723, thus notices this affair, among other pieces of the scandal of the day. "The second heroine (Mrs. Robinson) has engaged half the town in arms, from the nicety of her virtue, which was not able to bear the too near approach of Senesino in the opera, and her condescension in her accepting of Lord Peterborough for a champion, who has signalised both his love and courage upon this occasion in as many instances as ever Don Quixote did for Dulcinea. Poor Senesino, like a vanquished giant, was forced to confess upon his knees that Anastasia was a nonpareil of virtue and beauty. Lord Stanhope,* as dwarf to the said giant, joked on his side, and was challenged for his pains. Lord Delawar was Lord Peterborough's second; my lady miscarried—the whole town divided into parties on this important point. Innumerable have been the disorders between the two sexes on so great an account, besides half the House of Peers being put under an arrest. By the providence of Heaven, and the wise cares of his majesty, no bloodshed ensued. However, things are now tolerably accommodated; and the fair lady rides through the town in triumph in the shining berlin of her hero, not to reckon the more solid advantage of 100*l.* a month which 'tis said he

* The celebrated Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield.

ROBINSON

allows her." Such was the stigma under which Lord Peterborough allowed his wife to remain for many years, till he removed it by a public declaration of their marriage.

Dr. Burney has inserted in his History an account of this lady, and of the circumstances connected with her marriage, communicated to him by Mrs. Delany, Lady Peterborough's contemporary and intimate friend. It is very pleasing, and must necessarily be authentic.

"Mrs. Anastasia Robinson," says Mrs. Delany, "was of a middling stature, not handsome, but of a pleasing, modest countenance, with large blue eyes. Her deportment was easy, unaffected, and graceful. Her manner and address very engaging, and her behaviour, on all occasions, that of a gentlewoman, with perfect propriety. She was not only liked by all her acquaintance, but loved and caressed by persons of the highest rank, with whom she appeared always equal, without assuming. Her father's house, in Golden-square, was frequented by all the men of genius and refined taste of the times. Among the number of persons of distinction who frequented Mr. Robinson's house, and seemed to distinguish his daughter in a particular manner, were the Earl of Peterborough and General H———. The latter had shown a long attachment to her, and his attentions were so remarkable, that they seemed more than the effects of common politeness; and as he was a very agreeable man and in good circumstances, he was

favourably received, not doubting but that his intentions were honourable. A declaration of a very contrary nature was treated with the contempt it deserved, though Mrs. A. Robinson was very much prepossessed in his favour.

"Soon after this, Lord Peterborough endeavoured to convince her of his partial regard for her; but, agreeable and artful as he was, she remained very much upon her guard, which rather increased than diminished his admiration and passion for her. Yet still his pride struggled with his inclination; for all this time she was engaged to sing in public, a circumstance very grievous to her; but, urged by the best of motives, she submitted to it, in order to assist her parents, whose fortune was much reduced by Mr. Robinson's loss of sight, which deprived him of the benefit of his profession as a painter.

"At length Lord Peterborough made his declaration to her on honourable terms. He found it would be vain to make proposals on any other, and as he omitted no circumstance that could engage her esteem and gratitude, she accepted them, as she was sincerely attached to him. He earnestly requested her keeping it a secret till a more convenient time for him to make it known, to which she readily consented, having a perfect confidence in his honour.

"Mrs. A. Robinson had a sister, a very pretty accomplished woman, who married Dr. Arbuthnot's brother. After the death of Mr. Robinson, Lord

Peterborough took a house near Fulham, in the neighbourhood of his own villa at Parson's-green, where he settled Mrs. Robinson and her mother. They never lived under the same roof, till the earl, being seized with a violent fit of illness, solicited her to attend him at Mount Bevis, near Southampton, which she refused with firmness, but upon condition that, though still denied to take his name, she might be permitted to wear her wedding ring; to which, finding her inexorable, he at length consented.

"His haughty spirit was still reluctant to the making a declaration that would have done justice to so worthy a character as the person to whom he was now united; and indeed his uncontrollable temper and high opinion of his own actions made him a very awful husband, ill suited to Lady Peterborough's good sense, amiable temper, and delicate sentiments. She was a Roman Catholic, but never gave offence to those of a contrary opinion, though very strict in what she thought her duty. Her excellent principles and fortitude of mind supported her through many severe trials in her conjugal state. But at last he prevailed on himself to do her justice, instigated, it is supposed, by his bad state of health, which obliged him to seek another climate, and she absolutely refused to go with him unless he declared his marriage. Her attendance on him in this illness nearly cost her her life.

"He appointed a day for all his nearest relations

to meet him at the apartment over the gateway of St. James's palace, belonging to Mr. Poyntz, who was married to Lord Peterborough's niece, and at that time preceptor of Prince William, afterwards Duke of Cumberland. He also appointed Lady Peterborough to be there at the same time. When they were all assembled, he began a most eloquent oration, enumerating all the virtues and perfections of Mrs. A. Robinson, and the rectitude of her conduct during his long acquaintance with her, for which he acknowledged his great obligation and sincere attachment, declaring he was determined to do her that justice which he ought to have done long ago, which was, presenting her to all his family as his wife. He spoke this harangue with so much energy, and in parts so pathetically, that Lady Peterborough, not being apprised of his intentions, was so affected that she fainted away in the midst of the company.

"After Lord Peterborough's death, she lived a very retired life, chiefly at Mount Bevis, and was seldom prevailed on to leave that habitation but by the Duchess of Portland, who was always happy to have her company at Bulstrode, when she could obtain it, and often visited her at her own house.

"Among Lord Peterborough's papers, she found his memoirs, written by himself, in which he declared he had been guilty of such actions as would have reflected very much upon his character, for which reason she burnt them. This, however, contributed to complete the excellency of her

principles, though it did not fail giving offence to the curious inquirers after anecdotes of so remarkable a character as that of the Earl of Peterborough."

Lord Peterborough's declaration of his marriage took place in 1735, and he died at Lisbon the same year. Lady Peterborough died in 1750.

Anastasia Robinson's voice was a *contralto*. From the airs written for her by Handel and other composers, it appears that it was of small compass, and that her powers of execution were not great. Her success must be ascribed to an expressive simplicity in her style of singing, and her agreeable qualities as an actress.

Handel's next opera, *Amadigi*, or *Amadis of Gaul*, was first performed on 25th May, 1715. The music of this piece was never published, but Dr. Burney, who examined the MS. score, describes it as containing many beauties. The principal characters were performed by Nicolini (who had returned to England) and Anastasia Robinson. For several seasons this was the only new production of any importance.

During this period no English operas were attempted, but some little musical entertainments, or afterpieces, appear to have been brought forward. One of these was *The Contrivances*, a musical farce, the words and music of which were by Henry Carey. It was first performed in 1715, and was very successful. "Arethusa," says the

Biographia Dramatica, "used to be the probationary part for female singers before they were bold enough to venture upon characters of more consequence: a mode of conduct which would be more serviceable to the stage than beginning, as is usual now, with stepping on the top round of the ladder at once, a circumstance which precludes ascension and includes the danger of a fall." Nothing, indeed, can be more absurd or more disadvantageous to themselves, than the course which has been generally followed by aspirants to theatrical fame. Every unfledged actor must take his first flight in Hamlet, Othello, or Macbeth; and Mandane, as being the greatest and most difficult part in our musical drama, has been especially chosen for the debût of young female vocalists. How many promising commencements of this sort have been followed by total disappointment!

In 1717, an attempt was made to call the attention of the public to English operas, by the performance of *Camilla* and *Thomyris*, at the little theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, entirely by English singers, except Margherita de L'Epine; but the experiment was unsuccessful. From this time there was an intermission for some years in the performance of Italian operas, so that London appears to have been without any musical dramatic entertainments till the establishment of the Italian theatre, called the Royal Academy of Music, in 1720.

This establishment was the result of a plan formed by a number of distinguished members of the aristocracy, for patronising and carrying on the Italian opera. A fund of 50,000*l.* was raised by subscription, among the first personages of the kingdom, his majesty, George I., contributing 1,000*l.* The subscribers were incorporated into a society or company, whose affairs were conducted by a governor, deputy governor, and twenty directors. The first year the Duke of Newcastle was governor; Lord Bingley, deputy governor; and the directors were the Dukes of Portland and Queensberry, the Earls of Burlington, Stair, and Waldegrave, Lords Chetwynd and Stanhope, Generals Dormer, Wade, and Hunter, Sir John Vanburgh, Colonels Blathwayt and O'Hara, and James Bruce, Thomas Cole of Norfolk, Conyers D'Arcy, Brian Fairfax, George Harrison, William Pulteney, and Francis Whitworth, Esquires.

These gentlemen proceeded in their enterprise with great spirit. Handel, who at that time was residing with the Duke of Chandos at Cannons, was engaged as composer, and commissioned to procure singers; and Bononcini and Attilio Ariosti, composers of reputation on the continent, were also engaged to write operas. Handel immediately proceeded to Dresden, where Italian operas were then performed with great splendour at the court of Augustus, king of Poland and elector of

Saxony; and there he engaged Senesino, Berenstadt, Boschi, and Signora Durastanti.

The first opera composed by Handel for the Royal Academy of Music was *Rhadamisto*, written by Haym, a work superior to any which the composer had yet produced in this country. "It seems," says Burney, "as if he was not insensible of its worth; as he dedicated the book of the words to the king, George I., subscribing himself his majesty's 'most faithful subject;' which, as he was neither a Hanoverian by birth, nor a native of England, seems to imply his having been naturalised here by a bill in parliament." Whether Handel was, or was not, naturalised in England, *de jure*, he certainly was so *de facto*, by an uninterrupted residence of half a century in this country, where he arrived a youth of five-and-twenty, and where, at the age of seventy-five, he closed his life full of years and honour.

Bononcini, Handel's celebrated rival in dramatic composition, produced his first opera, *Astarto*, in the same year. It had great success, and was frequently performed for several seasons; though, on an examination of the music, it does not seem to have deserved the favour with which it was received.

The next novelty was the opera of *Muzio Scevola*, remarkable from the circumstance of being the joint production of the three composers, Handel, Bononcini, and Ariosti. It has been said that the

division was made by the directors of the Royal Academy, for the purpose of trying the abilities of the different composers, and of deciding which of them was deserving of preference. But there seems no ground for any other supposition than that the expedient was adopted for the sake of despatch. No step was consequently taken by the directors, implying a preference of any of the supposed competitors; and all three continued, for many years afterwards, to compose operas for this theatre.

Notwithstanding the efforts of three great composers, aided by the strongest company of performers that had ever been assembled in England, the Royal Academy of Music did not prosper. About 15,000*l.* of the capital subscribed was spent in the course of little more than a year from the establishment of the academy; and the subscribers appear to have become very reluctant to answer the calls made upon them, as appears from the advertisements published by the directors in the newspapers, urging the payment of the instalments in arrear, and threatening the defaulters with "the utmost rigour of the law." A new mode of subscription was therefore adopted. Intimation was made to the public, that tickets for the ensuing season should be issued on these terms; that each subscriber, on the delivery of his ticket, should pay ten guineas; that, on the 1st of February ensuing,

each subscriber should pay a further sum of five guineas, and five guineas more on the 1st of May. The academy promised fifty performances, and obliged themselves to allow a deduction proportionably, in case they did not give that number. This announcement, which was made on the 25th of November 1721, was the origin of the plan of an annual subscription, free from all risks or demands beyond its amount, which has been followed ever since.

The comparative merit of Handel and Bononcini became the subject of violent disputes in the fashionable circles. The Italian composer, though far inferior to his illustrious rival, was a man of great merit, and had a large body of warm partisans. Swift, who bestows a passing lash on many of the follies of his day, ridiculed the dissensions on this subject.

> " Some say that Signor Bononcini
> Compar'd to Handel's a mere ninny ;
> While others say that, to him, Handel
> Is hardly fit to hold a candle.
> Strange, that such difference should be
> 'Twixt tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee !"

Bononcini's *Griselda*, the best opera he produced in this country, was brought out in 1722, and had a very great run. The character of the patient heroine was represented by Anastasia Robinson, whose performance of this part is said to have completed her conquest of the heart of Lord Peter-

borough. The drama, written by Rolli, and founded on the well-known legend, is pleasing and interesting; and the airs, though frequently disfigured by the flounces and furbelows of the day, have a great deal of sweetness, elegance, and expression. His accompaniments have not the depth and solidity of those of Handel; but they are free and brilliant, and contain pretty effects by means of wind instruments, particularly the oboes. An examination, in short, of the score of *Griselda* (the only one we have seen of this author's) convinces us that Bononcini was by no means undeserving of the favour he enjoyed in his lifetime; though his reputation has suffered with posterity from his name being always associated, much to its disadvantage, with that of Handel.

Giovanni Battista Bononcini (or Buononcini) was a native of Modena. Long before his arrival in England he had distinguished himself as a composer both in Italy and Germany; and was also known in this country by the music of *Camilla*, adapted to English words by Haym. In 1720 he was in high reputation as a dramatic composer at Rome, when he was invited to London by the directors of the Royal Academy of Music. He continued in London, maintaining a respectable footing as composer for the opera-house, even while Handel was producing his finest dramatic works, till 1727, when his last opera, *Astyanax*, was produced. After this time a pension of £500 a year was settled on

him by the Duchess of Marlborough, by whom he had been always warmly patronised; and he was received by her into her house, where he lived in ease and affluence, presiding at the duchess's concerts, and gaining large sums by the publication of his compositions. He fell into discredit, however, by publishing, as his own, a madrigal which was discovered to have been composed by Lotti, of Venice. The work was claimed by its true author; and a correspondence took place between him and the secretary of the Royal Academy, in the course of which Lotti produced such evidence of the madrigal being his, that Bononcini stood convicted of the theft. After this discovery his reputation suffered so much, that soon afterwards, in 1733, he left England. It is said that he quitted this country along with a notorious impostor who, under the title of Count Ughi, had obtained a footing in the fashionable circles, and pretended to possess the art of making gold. Bononcini became his dupe, and was persuaded to share his fortunes; but the connexion does not appear to have subsisted long; for, a few years after leaving England, Bononcini was at Paris, subsisting by the exercise of his profession. At the conclusion of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, he was invited to Vienna by the emperor to compose the music for the rejoicings on that occasion; and afterwards went to Venice, in company with Monticelli, where they were both engaged for the ensuing carnival. This is the last account we

have of him; neither the dates of his birth nor of his death being recorded. His *eighth* work, a book of chamber duets, was published (according to Burney) at Bologna in 1691. If we suppose that he was then no more than thirty, he must, in 1748, have been eighty-seven. When in England, he was in the habit of calling himself a very old man; an assertion which, being seemingly contradicted by his appearance and activity, was ascribed to an unaccountable affectation. But the date of the above publication corroborates it, and gives countenance to what Dr. Burney says was the general opinion, that Bononcini's life was extended to nearly a century.

Attilio Ariosti, the third member of this musical triumvirate, maintained a respectable position in England, though his music was not so much in vogue as that of Bononcini. Like that composer, Ariosti was a veteran when he arrived in this country. We find his name among the Italian composers as early as 1696. He composed several operas for the Royal Academy of Music, the last of which, *Vespasiano*, which appeared in 1724, was the best and most successful. Burney describes this opera as having considerable merit; and says that "Attilio seems to have been a perfectly good harmonist, who had treasured up much good music in his head, but had little invention." The *bravura* air, composed for Senesino, given by Burney as a specimen, though full of what he properly calls

"the vocal fopperies of the times," is well constructed, and contains some remarkably pretty and ingenious imitations in the accompaniment. We have no account of Ariosti's life after his departure from England.

The Royal Academy of Music closed its existence in 1728. Notwithstanding the zeal with which its musical management was conducted by Handel, the series of beautiful works which he himself furnished, and the efforts of the first performers of the age, the affairs of this establishment never prospered. The annual receipts were always below the expenditure; so that constant demands were made upon the subscribers of the original capital of £50,000, the whole of which was thus called up and expended in less than seven years. The decline of the Italian opera, during this period, may be ascribed to various causes; one of them certainly was, the rivalries which existed among Handel's principal singers, especially Faustina and Cuzzoni, and the foolish violence with which the leaders of fashion took part in their quarrels, in place of joining (as they ought to have done) in supporting an entertainment to which both these rivals contributed their talents, without paying any regard to petty jealousies, which never would have been indulged in, had they not been so absurdly instigated and abetted. The public, too, had begun to grow weary of an entertainment, the character and beauties of which were, as yet, but little understood in England, and which

had been supported exclusively by the aristocracy, more for the sake of fashion than from any real taste for the Italian musical drama. The appearance of the *Beggar's Opera*, which at once became the rage among all classes, was an additional cause of the neglect of the Italian theatre.

A letter by the celebrated Dr. Arbuthnot, in the *London Journal* of March 23, 1728, gives a good view of the state of musical taste at that time. "As there is nothing," he says, "which surprises all true lovers of music more than the neglect into which the Italian operas are at present fallen, so I cannot but think it a very extraordinary instance of the fickle and inconstant temper of the English nation; a failing which they have been always endeavouring to cast upon their neighbours in France, but to which they themselves have just as good a title, as will appear to any one who will take the trouble to consult our historians." He goes on to notice the childish eagerness with which we had at first discarded our own language and music for the Italian, which, the instant we had acquired it in perfection, served only to raise disputes among us and divide the nation into parties, proving that our excessive fondness for Italian operas proceeded, not from a true taste for good music, but from a mere affectation of it; and he concludes thus: "The *Beggar's Opera* I take to be a touchstone to try British taste on, and it has accordingly proved effectual in discovering our true inclinations, which,

however artfully they may have been disguised for a while, will one time or another start up and disclose themselves. Æsop's story of the cat, who at the petition of her lover was changed into a fine woman, is pretty well known; notwithstanding which alteration, we find that, upon the appearance of a mouse, she could not resist the temptation of springing out of her husband's arms to pursue it, though it was on the very wedding-night. Our English audience have been for some time returning to their cattish nature, of which some particular sounds from the gallery have given us sufficient warning. And since they have so openly declared themselves, I must only desire that they will not think they can put on the fine woman again just when they please, but content themselves with their skill in caterwauling.—For my own part, I cannot think it would be any loss to real lovers of music, if all those false friends who have made pretensions to it only in compliance with the fashion, would separate themselves from them; provided our Italian opera could be brought under such regulations as to go on without them. We might then be able to sit and enjoy an entertainment of this sort, free from those disturbances which are frequent in English theatres, without any regard, not only to performers, but even to the presence of majesty itself.* In short, my comfort is, that though so

* This evidently alludes to the disgraceful *row* in the opera-house a few months before, when the fashionable partisans of

great a desertion may force us so to contract the expenses of our operas, as would put an end to our having them in as great perfection as at present, yet we shall be able at least to hear them without interruption."

In 1728 Handel brought out his *Tolomeo Rè d'Egitto*, the last opera he composed for the Royal Academy of Music. In his dedication to the earl of Albemarle, he implores that nobleman's protection for operas in general, as being "on the decline." Notwithstanding its merit, it was performed only seven times. The parties who had embarked in the establishment now refused to come under any new engagements for carrying it on: and, at the end of the season, when the theatre closed, the company broke up, and the performers went abroad in search of other engagements.

In the same year, Handel, finding the Italian opera no longer supported by its former patrons, entered into an engagement with Heidegger, who was then in possession of the opera-house, to carry it on at their own risk. He set out for Italy in autumn 1728, where he engaged a new company of singers, who, however, did not arrive in London till the autumn of the following year. Their arrival was thus announced to the public in the *Daily Courant:* —"Mr. Handel, who is just returned from Italy,

Faustina and Cuzzoni converted the theatre into a bear-garden, unrestrained by the presence of the princess Caroline. See *antè*, vol. i. p. 411.

has contracted with the following persons to perform in the Italian operas: Signor Bernacchi, who is esteemed the best singer in Italy. Signora Merighi, a woman of a very fine presence, an excellent actress, and a very good singer, with a counter-tenor voice. Signora Strada, who hath a very fine treble voice, a person of singular merit. Signor Annibale Pio Fabri, a most excellent tenor, and a fine voice. His wife, who performs a man's part well. Signora Bertoldi, who has a very fine treble voice; she is also a very genteel actress, both in men and women's parts. A bass voice from Hamburgh, there being none worth engaging in Italy." This bass singer, whose name was not mentioned, was John Gottfreid Reimschneider.

These performers, announced in this pompous and ridiculous style, (no doubt by Mr. Heidegger,) formed a very inferior company to that of the Royal Academy of Music, which comprised Senesino, Faustina, Cuzzoni, and Anastasia Robinson. None of them were of first-rate talents. Bernacchi owes his posthumous fame, not to his own vocal powers, but to the celebrated school of singing which he founded at Bologna. Strada, though a good singer, was unable to make any impression after Faustina and Cuzzoni; and her figure was so much the reverse of handsome, that she was usually called *the pig*. None of the others had acquired, or deserved, any celebrity; and Handel was sin-

gularly injudicious, or unfortunate, in the execution of his mission.

Whether from this cause, or a continued indifference on the part of the public towards the Italian opera, the new undertaking did not flourish, although Handel exerted all the powers of his genius in its support. *Parthenope*, one of the finest of his operas, which was first performed in February 1730, had only seven representations in the course of the season. In order to strengthen the company, Senesino was again engaged, though Handel and he had previously been on bad terms. The re-engagement of this singer was unfortunate for Handel; for their former differences were renewed, and went on increasing till they terminated in a total breach in 1733. The people of fashion, as was usual in those days, took part in these disputes; and the result was an association of a body of the nobility and gentry to carry on Italian operas in opposition to Handel. This party opened a subscription for performing operas at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields; invited Porpora as composer and conductor; and engaged a powerful company, comprising Senesino and Cuzzoni.

In order to make head against this opposition, Handel again repaired to Italy to engage performers, a task in which he appears to have been by no means skilful. At Bologna he heard Farinelli and Carestini, the latter of whom he unaccountably

preferred ; and his opponents, availing themselves of his error, immediately engaged Farinelli. The two rival establishments continued to be carried on, the one in the Haymarket and the other in Lincoln's Inn Fields, till 1735; when Handel's contract with Heidegger having expired, he left the Haymarket, and removed to Covent-garden, while "the nobility" took possession of the Haymarket theatre.

Handel made the most strenuous efforts to contend against the weight of aristocratic influence; and though a large portion of the nobility were opposed to him, he had the support of the king and the royal family. The king subscribed a thousand pounds towards carrying on the operas at Covent-garden the first season ; and their majesties and their family several times visited the theatre. By their struggle, the two hostile establishments only ruined themselves and each other ; and at the end of the season of 1737, both of them were broken up. The appetite for Italian music, never very great or general, had now become palled by satiety; and the English ballad operas, now frequently performed, were more congenial to the general taste of the public.

By this contest Handel for the time was ruined, having spent, in the course of it, the whole fortune, to the extent of ten thousand pounds, which he had previously accumulated. Both his body and mind sank under his distresses. In the spring of

1737, apologies were made in the newspapers for his absence from the theatre, on the score of indisposition, which was ascribed to rheumatism. But he laboured under deep depression of spirits, and had a stroke of palsy. In this condition he was removed to Tunbridge, and afterwards to Aix-la-Chapelle, where he derived so much benefit from the waters, or rather from a life of tranquillity, that he was able to return to London in November with renovated health and spirits.

Heidegger had now resumed the management of the theatre in the Haymarket, which had been abandoned by the nobility; and Handel again joined him. The affairs of the opera went on as calamitously as before; and Handel, after another vigorous but unavailing struggle, brought out, on the 10th of January, 1740, the opera of *Deidamia*, the last work he ever composed for the stage. Though one of the best of his dramatic productions, it was performed only three times; but the public were less inexcusable on this occasion than they had been on some previous ones; for the company did not contain a single first-rate performer, and were quite incapable of doing it justice.

Here, at the age of fifty-six, Handel terminated his labours as a dramatic composer; but it was to follow the much more glorious career which has raised him to unrivalled and unapproachable greatness.

From 1711 to 1740 inclusive, Handel composed

thirty-five Italian operas for the English stage; a greater number than those of all the other composers put together, which were performed in London during that period. The following is a chronological list of them:

Rinaldo, first performed in	1711
Il Pastor Fido	1712
Teseo (Theseus)	1713
Amadigi (Amadis of Gaul)	1715
Radamisto	1720
Muzio Scevola	1721
Floridante	——
Ottone (Otho)	1723
Flavio	——
Giulio Cesare	1724
Tamerlano	——
Rodelinda	1725
Scipione	1726
Alessandro	——
Admeto	1727
Riccardo Primo	——
Siroe	1728
Tolomeo (Ptolemy)	——
Lotario	1729
Partenope	1730
Poro (Porus)	1731
Ezio (Ætius)	1732
Sosarme	——
Orlando	1733
Ariadne	1734
Ariodante	1735
Alcina	——
Atalanta	1736
Arminio	1737

Giustino	1737
Berenice	——
Faramondo	1738
Serse (Xerxes)	——
Imeneo (Operetta)	1740
Deidamia	——

Of these operas, the following, as far as we have been able to discover, are those which were published;—*Rinaldo*, *Radamisto*, *Floridante*, *Otho*, *Flavio*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Tamerlano*, *Rodelinda*, *Scipione*, *Alessandro*, *Admeto*, *Riccardo Primo*, *Siroe*, *Lotario*, *Partenope*, *Poro*, *Ezio*, *Sosarme*, *Orlando*, *Atalanta*, and *Deidamia*. They were all printed by Walsh, the well-known publisher of that day; and many copies of them are still in existence. Of the others which, from their not having been printed entire, may be supposed to have been less successful, many of the most favourite pieces were published in various collections. One of these is "Apollo's Feast," in four volumes, containing "the favourite songs out of all Mr. Handel's operas;" and another is "Twelve Duets, collected out of all the late operas composed by Mr. Handel;" both printed by Walsh: and the favourite songs in Ptolemy, Amadis, and Theseus, were also published. The manuscript scores of the whole, we believe, are preserved in the king's library.

It is much to be lamented that Handel's Italian operas, the rich fruits of his genius during thirty years of his life, are now, and must in a great

measure ever be, lost to the world. They never were known out of England; and even in England, in consequence of the changes which took place in the structure and style of dramatic music, they were soon laid aside and forgotten. That they should cease to be performed on the stage was a necessary result of these changes: but it by no means follows that an immense body of vocal music, of the highest class, and full of imperishable beauties, should be consigned to oblivion.

It would profit nothing to enter into any detailed review of forgotten dramatic pieces which no supposable revolution in public taste can ever have the effect of reviving. As might be expected from Handel's sense and judgment, the poems on which he employed his genius were generally (if not uniformly) possessed of merit. Several of them were published under the name of Nicola Haym, a man of considerable reputation both as a poet and a musician. These are *Teseo*, *Radamisto*, *Otho*, *Flavio*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Tamerlano*, *Rodelinda*, and *Siroe:* but as *Rodelinda* really was written by Apostolo Zeno, and *Siroe* by Metastasio, though Haym took the credit of both, it may be doubted whether, in other instances also, he did not deck himself with borrowed feathers. *Scipione* is by Apostolo Zeno. *Poro* is the *Alessandro* of Metastasio. *Muzio Scevola*, *Floridante*, and *Riccardo Primo* are by Rolli,* whose merit as a lyric poet is

* Paola Antonio Rolli is the author of excellent translations

acknowledged by the Italian critics. They are generally upon striking heroic or romantic subjects, affording ample scope for dramatic effect and musical expression; and, represented as they were by the greatest performers of the time, they must have given as much delight as ever has been afforded by the musical drama.

But whatever pleasure they must have given to the audiences of that age, they would fail to do so now; and, indeed, their performance would be impracticable. The music of the principal parts was written for a class of voices which no longer exists; and for these parts no performers could now be found. A series of recitatives and airs, with only an occasional duet, and a concluding chorus of the slightest kind,* would appear meagre and dull to ears accustomed to the brilliant concerted pieces and finales of the modern stage; and Handel's accompaniments would appear thin and poor amidst the richness and variety of the modern orchestra. The vocal parts, too, are to a great extent in an obsolete taste. Many of the airs are mere strings

of Anacreon, Pindar, and Milton, into Italian. He resided long in England, where he published editions of Boccaccio and Ariosto. His works were printed at London in 1777.

* There is a *trio* in *Alcina* for a soprano and two contralto voices, beautifully constructed, impassioned, dramatic, and so free from any tinge of antiquity, that it might have appeared in an opera of yesterday. It is surprising that Handel, who thus showed himself aware of the use that might be made of concerted pieces, has hardly ever employed them.

of dry, formal divisions and unmeaning passages of execution, calculated to show off the powers of the fashionable singers ; and many others, admirable in their design, and containing the finest traits of melody and expression, are spun out to a wearisome length, and deformed by the cumbrous trappings with which they are loaded. Musical phrases, too, which, when Handel used them, had the charm of novelty, have become familiar and common through repetition by his successors.

Handel's Italian operas must now be looked upon as affording materials for concert or chamber performance ; and, in this point of view, they contain rich and ample treasures. Though Handel, to a certain extent, conformed to the fashion of his time, yet his genius and taste prevented him from being enslaved by it ; and his operas contain multitudes of airs which are models of simplicity, symmetry, and grace—airs which, in every age, must charm the ear and reach the heart, not of one, perhaps, who looks upon music as a matter of fashion, and thinks nothing worth listening to but the newest importation from Italy, but of every one who has ears to hear, and a heart to feel, the everlasting beauties of pure melody and true expression. A disposition to recur to the works of the old masters has begun to characterise the musical taste of England, and is becoming more and more prevalent. The madrigals of the age of Elizabeth, the songs of Purcell, the fugues of Sebastian Bach, the

sonatas of Scarlatti, are applauded by audiences who a few years ago were ignorant of their existence. The same thing would be the case with the opera airs of Handel, were our chief vocalists to explore them, study them, and bring them before the public. And were a skilful musician to raise some of these "gems of purest ray serene" from the "dark unfathomed caves" of oblivion in which they now lie buried, by publishing an elegant selection of them with the accompaniments written in the modern manner, he would render an essential service to his art, and his labours could not fail to be highly and extensively appreciated.

In thus using these songs as concert or chamber music, there would not be any difficulty on the score of the words, or any occasion for changing them. An opera air (especially in works of the old school) is a single thought or feeling, briefly and simply expressed; and, being generally quite intelligible without reference to any particular person or situation, may be sung by itself with perfect propriety and good effect. Take, for example, the beautiful air in *Sosarmes*, so well-known under its English name of "Lord, remember David."

"Rendi 'l sereno al ciglio;
Madre, non pianger più.
Temer d'alcun periglio
Oggi come puoi tu?"

This is the whole : and it is understood as a tender and soothing address by a daughter to a mother, which does not require, in order to comprehend its meaning and feel its expression, any reference to the opera in which it is sung. Any listener may imagine a situation in which a mother may be thus addressed by her child. By preserving the original words, full effect is given to the exquisite tenderness, as well as the graceful flow of the melody, both of which are much impaired by the English words. So much, indeed, is this the case, that "Rendi 'l sereno al ciglio," and "Lord remember David," hardly appear to be the same music. Several others of Handel's Italian airs have been united to sacred English words, with similar injury to their beauty and expression.

Another consequence of the English public knowing a very small number of these airs, only in connexion with sacred English words, is an impression that they are of too grave and solemn a cast for their original purpose, and better fitted to express the language of devotion than of earthly passion. This is an error, caused by a perverted association between the airs and the English words. There is a certain degree of vagueness in musical expression ; and an air, by the words applied to it, may be made to assume a new character, which, to those who know it under no other, may appear to be its real one. The music of "Holy, holy, Lord

God almighty," may seem sufficiently devotional; but the same music, as the air in *Rodelinda*, "Dove sei, amato bene?" addressed to a lover by his mistress, glows with ardent passion. We know this beautiful air, only in the cold, measured style in which we hear it sung at our sacred music-meetings; but imagine it breathed by a Grisi in her most passionate accents, and we shall conceive its true meaning and expression.

The fame of Handel is spreading from day to day, and the numbers of his admirers increasing. His chief title to immortality rests upon his sublime oratorios; but a full knowledge of his genius, in all its variety and extent, cannot be gained without exploring the treasures which lie hid in the dusty scores of his Italian operas.

During the period in which Handel produced his Italian operas, many of the pieces of the most distinguished composers of the time were also performed on the London stage. Besides Bononcini and Ariosti, operas by Porpora, Vinci, Veracini, Domenico Scarlatti, Hasse, and other masters, who have been already mentioned, were represented. After this time the theatre was supplied for a while with pieces by Galuppi, Gluck, (neither of whom had as yet given much promise of their future greatness,) Pescetti, Lampugnani, and several other composers of very inferior rank to those who had preceded them. England felt the effects of the

decay of the musical drama in Italy; and mediocrity was the characteristic of the singers as well as of the composers. Owing to this decline on the one hand, and probably, on the other, to the gradual rise of our national opera, and the attention paid to it, the Italian opera fell into such neglect, that for several years, about the middle of the last century, the performance of serious operas appears to have been given up.

"In 1753 and 1754," says Burney, "serious operas, after languishing in poverty and disgrace from the departure of Monticelli in 1746, were again attempted under the management of Signor Vaneschi. And in November the theatre was opened with pasticcios and revived operas, performed by a company of singers to which the public manifested no great partiality. During this year and the beginning of 1754, *Nerone*, a pasticcio; Galuppi's *Enrico; Didone*, by Ciampi; *Artaserse*, a pasticcio; *Admeto*, by Handel; and *Attilio*, by Jomelli, were all received with great indifference, as performed by Serafini, the first man, with little voice, though a good actor; Visconti, first woman, but now *passée;* with Ranieri, Albuzio, Passerini and Frasi: nor could the united powers and sum-total of attraction of these singers keep the manager out of debt, or hardly out of jail, till the arrival of Mingotti, who, in the autumn of 1754, revived the favour of our lyric theatre with considerable splendour."

Before following the subsequent career of the Italian opera in England, it is necessary to take a view of its further progress in its native country. But in the mean time it may be proper to return to the English opera, and to trace the steps by which it had now arrived at considerable importance.

CHAPTER II.

Neglect of the English opera at the beginning of the 18th century—*The Beggar's Opera*—Its origin—First performance—Political allusions—Its success—Lavinia Fenton—Thomas Walker—Jeremiah Clarke—Authors of songs—Observations on *The Beggar's Opera*—*Polly*—Gay's other pieces—*Acis and Galatea*—Its music by Handel.

It has been seen that the establishment of the Italian opera in England was attended with the total neglect of the English musical drama. From the year 1712, when Hughes and Galliard made an abortive attempt to revive it by producing the opera of *Calypso*, no English musical piece of the slightest note (excepting Carey's *Contrivances*, performed in 1715) was produced, till the year 1727, when a new impulse was given to the public taste by the appearance of the *Beggar's Opera*.

The music of this celebrated piece consists of ballad airs, common at the time, to which Gay adapted the words of his songs. Among them are several of the finest Scotch melodies; a circumstance which probably arose from Gay's residence in Edinburgh with his patron the Duke of Queens-

berry. The airs were provided with accompaniments, and prepared for performance, by Dr. Pepusch.

It has been generally said that the *Beggar's Opera* was intended to ridicule the Italian opera; an evident mistake, for there is not the slightest attempt to burlesque or parody the Italian dramas or music, to which it has not the smallest resemblance either in subject, style, or form. The following account of its origin and first performance is given by Pope.

"Dr. Swift had been observing once to Mr. Gay what an odd pretty thing a Newgate pastoral might make. Gay was inclined to try such a thing for some time, but afterwards thought it would be better to write a comedy on the same plan. This was what gave rise to the *Beggar's Opera*. He began on it; and when first he mentioned it to Swift, the doctor did not much like the project. As he carried it on, he showed what he wrote to both of us, and we now and then gave a correction, or a word or two of advice; but it was wholly of his own writing. When it was done, neither of us thought it would succeed. We showed it to Congreve, who said it would either take greatly or be damned confoundedly. We were all, at the first night of it, in great uncertainty of the event, till we were much encouraged by overhearing the Duke of Argyle, who sat in the next box to us, say, 'It will do—it must do! I see it in the eyes of them.' This was a good while before the first act was over, and so

gave us ease soon; for the duke (besides his own good taste) had a particular knack in discovering the taste of the public. He was quite right in this as usual: the good-nature of the audience appeared stronger every act, and ended in a clamour of applause." We learn, however, from Boswell, on the authority of Quin, that the *Beggar's Opera*, during the first night of its appearance, was long in a very dubious state; that there was a disposition to damn it, and that it was saved by the song, "Oh, ponder well, be not scvere!" the audience being much affectcd by the innocent looks of Polly, whcn she came to thcse two lines, which exhibit at once a painful and ridiculous image,—

> "For on the rope that hangs my dear,
> Depends poor Polly's life."

This first performance was on 29th January 1728. The reception of the piece is thus described in the notes to the *Dunciad*: "This piece was received with greater applause than ever was known. Besides being acted in London sixty-three days without intermission, and renewed the next season with equal applause, it spread into all the great towns of England;—it made its progress into Wales, Scotland, and Ireland; the ladies carried about with them the favourite songs of it in fans; houses were furnished with it in screens; furthermore it drove out of England (for that season) the Italian opera, which had carried all before it for ten years."

There are many satirical allusions, both in the dialogue and the songs, to the public characters and transactions of the day. Sir Robert Walpole had frequently been the object of Gay's satire. He was not deterred, however, from being present on the first night, and sat in the stage-box. Lockit's song—

> "When you censure the age,
> Be cautious and sage,
> Lest the courtiers offended should be;
> If you mention vice or bribe,
> 'Tis so pat to all the tribe,
> That each cries, that was levell'd at me!"

was loudly encored. Sir Robert, observing the pointed manner in which the audience applied the last line to him, dexterously parried the thrust, at the end of the second repetition of the song, by calling out "encore!" in a voice that was audible throughout the house. This produced a general cheer from the audience, and the song was sung a third time.

Notwithstanding this escape, however, the audience continued, for many years afterwards, to apply to Sir Robert Walpole various allusions in the *Beggar's Opera*, so that (Macklin says) he could never, with any satisfaction, be present at its performance. Not only was the song above mentioned applied to him, but the name of *Bob Booty* was never mentioned without raising a laugh at his expense; and the quarrelling scene between Peachum

and Lockit was so well understood at the time to allude to a recent quarrel between the two ministers, Sir Robert and Lord Townshend, that it constantly kept the audience in a roar of laughter. Horace Walpole gives an account of the extraordinary scene between the two statesmen thus alluded to by Gay. Sir Robert and Lord Townshend happened to meet at Colonel Selwyn's, in Cleveland-court, after having differed as to a foreign negociation, which Walpole objected to being mentioned in the House of Commons. They renewed their dispute; and, in answer to Walpole's objection, Townshend said, "Since you object, and the House of Commons is more your affair than mine, I shall not persist in my opinion: but, as I now give way, I cannot help observing, that, *upon my honour*, I think that mode of proceeding would have been most advisable." Walpole, piqued at this expression, replied with heat, "My Lord, for once, then, there is no man's sincerity which I doubt so much as yours; and I never doubt it so much as when you are pleased to use such strong expressions." Townshend, incensed at this sarcasm, seized Sir Robert by the collar. Sir Robert laid hold of his in return; and both, at the same instant quitting their holds, laid their hands on their swords. Mrs. Selwyn, frightened, wanted to call the guard, but was prevented by Mr. Pelham, who made it up between them, though the contemptuous expressions used on this occasion rendered all attempts to heal

the breach ineffectual. This scene happened in the end of the year 1727, not many weeks before the appearance of the *Beggar's Opera*, and was then fresh in the memory of the public.

The opera was first offered to Cibber, then manager of Drury Lane, and rejected by him. It was then offered to Rich, the rival potentate of Covent Garden, who had the good sense and good fortune to accept it. Its profits were so very great, both to the author and the manager, that it was said that the "*Beggar's Opera* had made Rich gay, and Gay rich." The author's profits are said to have been not less than £2,000. Not only was it profitable to the author and manager, but to some of the performers, whom it at once raised from obscurity to distinction. Miss Fenton, who represented Polly, became all at once the idol of the town. Her portrait was engraved and sold in great numbers. Her life was written; books of letters and verses to her published; collections made of her *bon-mots* and witticisms; and she herself placed in a situation which led to her elevation to the peerage.

Lavinia Fenton was the daughter of Mr. Beswick, a lieutenant in the navy, and was born in 1708. When she was an infant her mother married a person of the name of Fenton, a coffee-house keeper at Charing-cross, and the child was then called by the name of her father-in-law. She discovered a genius for singing before she could speak; and, as soon as she was old enough, she received instruction

from some of the best masters, principally in the English ballad style. She also exhibited a talent for acting. At eighteen she obtained an engagement at the Haymarket, and made her *debût* in the character of Monimia in the *Orphan*, her performance of which made her be regarded as a very promising actress. Her beauty at the same time attracted many admirers; among others, a young libertine of high rank fell so desperately in love with her, that he offered to abandon the pleasures of the town, and retire with her into the country on any terms, short of marriage, she might propose. The offer was rejected with disdain; and the circumstance, becoming public, greatly increased her reputation.

She afterwards appeared in the character of Cherry in the *Beaux Stratagem*, which she looked so admirably, and played with such delightful simplicity and archness, that she charmed the public, and obtained from Rich, the manager of Covent Garden, the tempting offer of fifteen shillings a week. Induced by this liberality, she left the Haymarket for Covent Garden, where she remained at the same salary till she appeared in the *Beggar's Opera*, when her salary, in consequence of the astonishing success of this piece, was raised to thirty shillings a week.

Her great celebrity made her more than ever the object of the amorous addresses of men of fashion. She appears to have withstood many attempts of

this nature, till she was addressed by the Duke of Bolton, to whose solicitations, though he was a married man, she at length yielded, probably with a view to the elevation which she afterwards attained. Swift, in one of his letters written at this time, says, "The Duke of Bolton has run away with Polly Peachum, having settled four hundred a year on her during pleasure, and, upon disagreement, two hundred more." She lived with this nobleman, as his mistress, for twenty-three years. On the death of the Duchess of Bolton in 1751, the duke immediately married Miss Fenton. She died in 1760, at the age of fifty-two.

It is said that the Duke of Bolton often declared that he was first captivated by the plaintive and bewitching manner in which Polly sang the appeal to her father and mother, "O ponder well, be not severe." Macklin said that her dress in Polly was very simple, resembling that of a modern quaker; and this is confirmed by the portraits of her which have been preserved.

A very favourable character of her in her elevation is given by Dr. Joseph Warton, in a note subjoined to one of Swift's letters to Gay. "She was," he says, "a very accomplished and most agreeable companion; had much wit, good strong sense, and a just taste in polite literature Her person was agreeable and well made; though I think she could never be called a beauty. I have had the pleasure of being at table with her, when

her conversation was much admired by the first characters of the age, particularly by old Lord Bathurst and Lord Granville."

The original Macheath, Thomas Walker, gained much celebrity by means of this part. It was originally intended that it should be performed by Quin, whose vocal abilities were barely sufficient to enable him to sing a convivial song at a dinner-table. He did not, therefore, much relish the task of sustaining a musical part, but nevertheless took his share in the rehearsals. At the close of one of them Walker was heard humming some of the songs behind the scenes, in a style which attracted the notice of the persons on the stage. Quin seized the opportunity of getting rid of the part, and said to Rich, "Ay, there's a man much more qualified to do you justice than I am." Walker was immediately called on to come forward; and Gay, who was present, instantly seeing his superiority, accepted him as the hero of the piece. Walker, for some years before this time, had been rising in reputation as an actor; but his success in Macheath seems to have been fatal to him. His company became so much courted by debauched young men of fashion, that he fell into inveterate habits of dissipation; and, after a constant decline in health, character, and circumstances, died in Dublin, in great distress, in 1744, in the forty-sixth year of his age. He was the author of several dramatic pieces of little moment, which,

however, met with some temporary success. As an actor and singer, he is thus described by Davies: "He had from nature great advantages of voice and person: his countenance was manly and expressive; and the humour, ease, and gaiety which he assumed in Macheath and other characters of this complexion, rendered him a great favourite with the public. He knew little scientifically of music, other than singing a song in good ballad tune; but that singing was supported by a speaking eye and inimitable action."

The air of the celebrated song, "'Tis woman that seduces all mankind," was composed by Jeremiah Clarke, organist of the Chapel-royal, and a distinguished composer of cathedral music. He came to an untimely and melancholy end, attended with extraordinary circumstances, which were communicated by one of his intimate friends to Dr. Burney. "Being at the house of a friend in the country, he found himself so miserable, that he suddenly determined to return to London. His friend, observing in his behaviour great marks of dejection, furnished him with a horse and a servant to attend him. In his way to town, a fit of melancholy and despair having seized him, he alighted, and giving his horse to the servant, went into a field, in the corner of which there was a pond surrounded with trees, which pointed out to his choice two ways of getting rid of life: but not being more inclined to the one than to the other, he left it to

the determination of chance; and taking a piece of money out of his pocket, and tossing it in the air, determined to abide by its decision; but the money falling on its edge in the clay, seemed to prohibit both these means of destruction. His mind was too much disordered to receive comfort from, or take advantage of this delay: he therefore mounted his horse and rode to London, determined to find some other means of getting rid of life; and in July, 1707, not many weeks after his return, he shot himself in his own house in St. Paul's Churchyard. The late Mr. John Reading, organist of St. Dunstan's Church, intimately acquainted with Clarke, happening to go by the door at the instant the pistol went off, upon entering the house found his friend and fellow-student in the agonies of death."

The songs in the *Beggar's Opera* were not all written by Gay. The first song, "The modes of the court," was written by Lord Chesterfield; "Virgins are like the fair flower in its lustre," (united to a beautiful air of Purcell's,) by Sir Charles Hanbury Williams; "Where you censure the age," by Swift; and "Gamesters and lawyers are jugglers alike" was supposed to be written by Mr. Fortescue, then Master of the Rolls.*

This piece has kept possession of the stage for upwards of a century. *Macheath* and *Polly* have

* This information is given in the *Memoirs of Macklin*, on the authority of the dowager Lady Townshend.

been favourite parts with most of our principal vocal performers; and, when well represented, it has rarely failed to draw crowded audiences in every part of the kingdom. Its effects on public morals have been the subject of much discussion and controversy. Soon after its appearance it was praised by Swift, as a piece which placed all kinds of vice in the strongest and most odious light. Others, however, censured it, as giving encouragement not only to vice but to crime, by making a highwayman the hero, and dismissing him at last unpunished. It was even said that its performance had a visible effect in increasing the number of this description of freebooters. The celebrated police magistrate, Sir John Fielding, once told Hugh Kelly, the dramatist, on a successful run of the *Beggar's Opera*, that he expected, in consequence of it, a fresh cargo of highwaymen at his office. Upon Kelly's expressing his surprise at this, Sir John assured him, that, ever since the first representation of that piece, there had been, on every successful run, a proportionate number of highwaymen brought to the office, as would appear by the books any morning he chose to look over them. Kelly did so, and found the observation to be strictly correct.*

Sir John Fielding's conviction on this subject appears from the circumstance, that, in 1772, he addressed letters to the managers of both the

* *Memoirs of Macklin.*

theatres, remonstrating against the performance of the *Beggar's Opera*, on account of its tendency to increase the number of thieves and highwaymen. Garrick, then unprovided with a Macheath, affected to approve of this advice: but Colman's answer was as follows:—"Mr. Colman's compliments to Sir John Fielding. He does not think *his* the *only* house in Bow-street where thieves are hardened and encouraged, and will persist in continuing the representation of that admirable satire, the *Beggar's Opera*."*

Dr. Johnson, noticing the two contradictory opinions as to the moral effects of this piece, says,† "Both these opinions are surely exaggerated. The play, like many others, was plainly written only to divert, without any moral purpose, and is therefore not likely to do good: nor can it be conceived, without more speculation than life requires or admits, to be productive of much evil. Highwaymen and housebreakers seldom frequent the playhouse, or mingle in any elegant diversion; nor is it possible for any one to imagine that he may rob with safety, because he sees Macheath represented upon the stage." In one of the Doctor's conversations recorded by Boswell, we also find an opinion given by him on this subject. "The *Beggar's Opera*," says Boswell, "and the common question whether it was pernicious in its effects, having been

* *Memoirs of Lee Lewis.*

† *Life of Gay.*

discussed; JOHNSON—'As to this matter, which has been very much contested, I myself am of opinion that more influence has been ascribed to the *Beggar's Opera* than it in reality ever had; for I do not believe that any man was ever made a rogue by being present at its representation. At the same time I do not deny that it may have some influence, by making the character of a rogue familiar, and in some degree pleasing.' Then collecting himself, as it were, to give a heavy stroke; 'There is in it such a *labefactation* of all principles, as to be injurious to morality.' "

Swift's opinion that the *Beggar's Opera* was a moral piece, because it placed all kinds of vice in the strongest and most odious light, is such a palpable absurdity, that we may be well assured it never would have been advanced by a man of his judgment, had it not been for his personal predilection for his friend the author. Dr. Johnson's argument that this piece could not be productive of much evil, because highwaymen and housebreakers seldom frequent the playhouse, or mingle in any elegant diversion, is founded on erroneous premises; the fact being, on the contrary, that the theatres have always been very much frequented by such persons. There are no highwaymen now. Changes in the state of society and manners have extinguished the race; and the memory of the Turpins, Duvals, and Shepherds of other days, lives only in the pages of our novelists and play-

writers. There are no dashing blades now among the applauding audience, like those whose hearts burnt within them at the inspiring war-cry,

> "Let us take the road!
> Hark, I hear the sound of coaches!"

and who rushed from the theatre, animated with the love of glory as well as of gold, to realise, on the heaths of Hounslow or Bagshot, the glowing images which had been placed before them. Whatever it may once have done, the example of Macheath will no longer create highwaymen. But these heroes have left their successors, though of a somewhat different class; the *swells* of the present day—gentlemen, too, and men of pleasure about town, who can both enjoy and profit by the pictures of London life they find in the *Beggar's Opera*. Macheath, moreover, is not the only hero of the piece. There are fine specimens of every kind of depredator on the property of the public; and Filch, the dexterous pickpocket, if we may judge from the shouts and laughter of the galleries, has more friends and admirers among the audience than the bold highwayman ever had, even in the palmy days of the road. But, independently of the direct incentive to robbery and theft, Dr. Johnson, we think, has stated the great objection to this piece in the very Johnsonian phrase already quoted; "there is in it such a *labefactation* of all principles, as to be injurious to morality." One

cannot touch pitch without being defiled; nor can the mind become familiar with profligacy and indecency without contamination. The piece is merely a display of different forms of depravity. Every character is vicious and debased, with the exception of Polly; and she, so situated, is felt to be a moral impossibility, for the purity of her character could not have lived in such an atmosphere of pollution. Attempts have latterly been made to diminish the grossness of the exhibition; and certain scenes, which were always represented five-and-twenty years ago, have since been omitted, as being offensive to common decency. Characters, sentiments, and language, so calculated to sully the mind of ingenuous youth, are carefully kept by parents from the view and knowledge of their sons and daughters in every situation except within the walls of our national theatres. Recently, however, the *Beggar's Opera* has been rarely performed. Whether this has arisen from a growing sense of its impropriety, or from the want of fitting representatives of the hero and heroine, we shall not pretend to say. We believe that its licentiousness has contributed, no less than its wit and the beauty of its music, to the favour it has so long enjoyed: but it may be presumed that the time is come, or at least approaching, when its licentiousness will banish it from the stage, notwithstanding its wit and the beauty of its music.

A well-meaning but very abortive attempt to

improve the morality of this piece was made by a Captain Thompson, whose new version of it was produced at Covent Garden in 1777. The most material change was made in the close. Macheath is sentenced to hard labour on the Thames. Here he is visited by Polly and Lucy, acknowledges the lenity of his sentence, and promises to become a virtuous member of society. The audience, however, did not approve of this homily being tacked to their favourite display of blackguardism; and the piece was damned accordingly.

The success of the *Beggar's Opera* induced Gay to write a continuation of it, which he entitled *Polly*. But at that time he was out of favour with the court, having been charged with the authorship of some libels and seditious pamphlets: and its performance was prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain, at the very time when it was about to be put in rehearsal. This, however, was no loss to the author; for it would most probably, on account of its inferiority, have failed in the performance; whereas its publication, supported by a large subscription, which was procured by Gay's great personal interest, and in consequence of the persecution he had undergone, produced as large a sum as a considerable run of the piece would have obtained for him. He prefixed to it a preface, in which he gives the following account of its suppression. "It was on Saturday evening, December 7, 1728, that I waited on the Lord Chamberlain.

I desired to have the honour of reading the opera to his grace, but was ordered to leave it with him, which I did, upon expectation of having it returned on the Monday following. But I had it not till Thursday, December 12, when I received it from his grace, with this answer; 'That it was not allowed to be acted, but commanded to be supprest.' This was told me in general without any reasons assigned, or any charge against me of my having given any particular offence. Since this prohibition, I have been told that I am accused, in general terms, of having written many disaffected libels and seditious pamphlets. As it has ever been my utmost ambition (if that word may be used on this occasion) to lead a quiet and inoffensive life, I thought my innocence in this particular would never have required a justification; and as this kind of writing is what I have ever detested and never practised, I am persuaded so groundless a calumny can never be believed but by those who do not know me."

Polly was revived by Colman, at the Haymarket, in 1777, but without success. A remarkable circumstance happened on this occasion. The Duchess of Queensberry, who had been Gay's patroness, and had exerted herself, first, in endeavouring to get this piece performed, and then to promote the subscription on its publication, was present, fifty years afterwards, at its representation in the Haymarket theatre. She was then very

old, and survived this, her last visit to the theatre, only a few weeks.

Gay's fame rests chiefly on the *Beggar's Opera.* Among his other dramatic pieces was *Acis and Galatea,* immortalised by its union with the music of Handel, which was performed in 1732, and a forgotten opera, called *Achilles,* performed in 1733.

Acis and Galatea, though a musical drama, was not intended to be acted in the manner of an opera. It was, however, performed in this manner at the Haymarket theatre, without Handel's sanction. This performance was announced by the following advertisement: "May 10th, (1732,) at the theatre in the Haymarket, on Thursday, the 12th instant, *Acis and Galatea,* a pastoral drama, set by Mr. Handel, will be performed, with all the choruses, scenes, machines, and other decorations; being the first time it was performed in a theatrical way. The part of Acis by Mr. Mountier, being the first time of his appearing in character on any stage; Galatea by Miss Arne. Pit and boxes at five shillings." Miss Arne, afterwards Mrs. Cibber, was the sister of the celebrated composer. This illegitimate performance produced the following announcement from Handel: "June the 10th, will be performed *Acis and Galatea,* a serenata, revised with several additions, at the opera-house, by a great number of the best voices and instruments. *There will be no action on the stage;* but the

scene will represent, in a picturesque manner, a rural prospect, with rocks, groves, fountains, and grottos, among which will be disposed a chorus of nymphs and shepherds; the habits and every decoration suited to the subject." This undoubtedly is the manner in which this charming little piece ought to be performed. It is a dramatic poem, but not an acting play, and the incidents are such as cannot be represented on the stage. A few years ago another attempt was made to perform it as an opera, but without success. Polyphemus is entirely an ideal character, and any attempt to personate him must be ridiculous; and the concluding scene, in which the giant throws a huge rock at the head of his rival, produced shouts of merriment. *Acis and Galatea* is performed in an orchestra, in the manner in which oratorios are performed: but its effect would certainly be heightened by the picturesque scenery and decorations employed by Handel himself.

In listening to *Acis and Galatea*, one cannot but regret that Handel never employed his genius on the English opera. Had this piece been constructed with a view to theatrical representation, the effect of the music, so performed, would have been in the highest degree dramatic: supposing the curtain to rise upon a pastoral landscape, and the stage to be filled by picturesque groups of "happy nymphs and happy swains," how delicious would be their choral song in praise of "the pleasures of

the plains!" Imagine, likewise, the effect of the chorus announcing the terrible approach of the giant, uttered by the same groups, with all the appearance and action of confusion and dismay. Finer specimens of the theatrical chorus are nowhere to be found; and there is nothing in his own Italian operas at all comparable to them. Nor can anything be more dramatic than the design of the lovely trio, "The flocks shall leave the mountains," composed of the tender accents of the lovers, all unconscious of their danger, mingled with the moody mutterings of the jealous monster, which rise to a burst of vindictive fury. The airs, too, how sweet and graceful—how full of variety and freshness! Had Handel been induced, by any fortunate circumstances, to write a few English operas, he would unquestionably have produced such models of excellence as would have influenced, to this day, the character of our musical drama.

CHAPTER III.

Miss Rafter, afterwards Mrs. Clive—Henry Carey—Miss Arne, afterwards Mrs. Cibber—Thomas Augustine Arne—John Beard—Cecilia Young, afterwards Mrs. Arne—Lampe—*The Dragon of Wantley*—*Comus*—Various operas by Arne—*Artaxerxes*—English recitative—Arne's airs—*Love in a Village*—Character of Arne—Boyce—*The Chaplet* and *Shepherd's Lottery*—Pasticcio operas—Miss Brent—Michael Arne.

"In 1730," says Dr. Burney, "Miss Rafter, afterwards the celebrated Mrs. Clive, first appeared on the stage at Drury-lane, as a singer, at the benefit of Harry Carey, who seems to have been her singing-master." This is inaccurate. Miss Rafter, whose promising vocal talents had attracted the notice of Cibber, first appeared in 1729, at the age of seventeen, in the character of a boy, and sang a song with great approbation. She immediately afterwards appeared in a pastoral drama of Cibber's, called *Love in a Riddle*, in which she performed the part of a shepherdess. In the bill, the part of Phillida is by "Mrs. Rafter." At that time that appellation of *miss*, instead of *mistress*,

was beginning to be applied to unmarried ladies; and we find *mistress* and *miss* applied to Miss Rafter in the course of the same year. *Love in a Riddle* was violently hooted the first night. On the second night, when the Prince of Wales was present, it met with the same reception; on which Cibber came forward and said that the piece should be withdrawn, but that, in the mean time, he hoped the audience would consider in whose presence they were. While Miss Rafter was singing, the riot ceased. A person in the boxes called out to his companion, "Zounds, Tom, take care, or that charming little devil will save all!" This piece was afterwards reproduced with considerable alterations, and performed with success, under the title of *Damon and Phillida.*

In 1732 Miss Rafter married Mr. Clive, a gentleman of the law; but the union was not productive of happiness, and they agreed to separate. "Yet," says the *Biographia Dramatica*, "notwithstanding the temptations to which a theatre is sometimes apt to expose young persons of the female sex, and the too great readiness of the public to give way to unkind suppositions in regard to them, calumny itself has never seemed to aim the slightest arrow at her fame." In 1768 she quitted the stage, and retired to a small but elegant house near Strawberry Hill, where she passed the remainder of her life in ease and independence, respected and beloved for her virtues and pleasing qualities.

"A more extensive walk in comedy," says Davies, "than that of Mrs. Clive, cannot be imagined; the chambermaid, in every varied shape which art or nature could lend her; characters of whim and affectation, from the high-bred Lady Fanciful to the vulgar Mrs. Heidelberg; country girls, romps, hoydens, and dowdies; superannuated beauties, viragoes, and humorists. To a strong and pleasing voice, with an ear for music, she added all the sprightly action requisite to a number of parts in ballad farces. Her mirth was so genuine, that whether it was restrained to the arch sneer and the suppressed half laugh, widened to the broad grin, or extended to the downright honest burst of loud laughter, the audience was sure to accompany her."—"Her singing," says Burney, "which was intolerable when she meant it to be fine, in ballad farces and songs of humour, was, like her comic acting, everything it should be." She was a favourite of the public as a singer as well as an actress; and we find her name in the *dramatis personæ* of most of the musical pieces which appeared while she remained on the stage.

The entertainment for Carey's benefit, in which Miss Rafter appeared in 1730, seems to have been marked with the eccentricity of his character. It was whimsically announced in the *Daily Post* of December 3. After mentioning the play, (which was *Greenwich Park*,) and the additional entertainments of singing, particularly a dialogue of Purcell,

by Mr. Carey and Miss Rafter, and a cantata of Mr. Carey's by Miss Rafter, there is an apology from Carey for the tragedy of half an act (*Chrononhotonthologus*) not being performed; but a promise is made of indemnification by the entertainments between the acts: And there is the following editorial paragraph; "At our friend Harry Carey's benefit to-night, the powers of music, poetry, and painting assemble in his behalf, he being an admirer of the three sister arts: the body of musicians meet in the Haymarket, whence they march in great order, preceded by a magnificent moving organ, in form of a pageant, accompanied by all the kinds of musical instruments ever in use, from Tubal Cain to this day; a great multitude of booksellers, authors, and printers form themselves into a body at Temple-bar, whence they march with great decency to Covent Garden, preceded by a little army of printers' devils with their proper instruments: here the two bodies of music and poetry are joined by the brothers of the pencil; when, after taking some refreshment at the Bedford-arms, they march in solemn procession to the theatre, amidst an innumerable crowd of spectators."

The success of the *Beggar's Opera* now caused the production of other pieces in a similar form, and may be said to have given rise to the English ballad opera. One of the first of these was *The Village Opera*, written by Charles Johnson, the

music of which consisted of old tunes to new words. Bickerstaff's celebrated *Love in a Village* was an imitation of this piece.

In 1732, an opera, *Teraminta*, written by Henry Carey, and composed by Smith, a musician of some ability, was brought out with little effect; but, in the same year, another opera, called *Amelia*, also written by Carey, and composed by John Frederick Lampe, was performed with success. The music of this last opera, according to the advertisement of the performance, was "set in the Italian manner." In this piece Miss Arne, afterwards the celebrated Mrs. Cibber, made her first appearance as a singer, and was much applauded.

Miss Arne was the sister of THOMAS AUGUSTINE ARNE, who, though himself as yet unknown as a musician, had prepared his sister, by his instructions, for her successful *debût*. They were the children of an eminent upholsterer in King-street, Covent Garden, in whose house the Indian kings lodged in their visit to London, so humorously described in the *Spectator*. The young man received a good education, having been intended for the profession of the law. When at Eton, he is said to have tormented his schoolfellows by constantly blowing on an old cracked flute. After he returned home, he used to gratify his passion for music by borrowing a livery and going to the upper gallery of the opera-house, which was then appropriated to domestics. He had a spinet concealed in his

room, on which, after muffling the strings with a handkerchief, he used to practise during the night. He was articled as clerk to an attorney, but made greater progress in music than in law. He contrived to obtain instructions on the violin, on which instrument he acquired such a proficiency, that his father, happening to call one evening upon a gentleman in the neighbourhood, and being shown into the drawing-room where a musical party was assembled, found his son in the act of leading the band. Finding the young man's musical propensities so unconquerable, and his abilities so great, his father allowed him not only to pursue the study of the art with a view to making it his profession, but to instruct his sister in singing.

The success of his pupil in the part of Amelia induced Arne to prepare another for her. He accordingly composed new music for Addison's opera of *Rosamond*. It was performed in 1733, confirming the reputation of Miss Arne, and laying the foundation of that of her brother, who now became known for the first time as a composer. His next work was Fielding's *Tom Thumb*, altered into the form of an opera, the music of which was announced as being composed "after the Italian manner." It was performed in 1733, the part of Tom Thumb being represented by Master Arne, the composer's brother. Though Arne thus made himself favourably known to the public, he did not for some years produce any work of consequence.

Comus, which established his reputation, did not appear till 1738.

In 1736, JOHN BEARD, the celebrated tenor singer, made his first appearance on the stage, at Covent Garden, in a dramatic entertainment called *The Royal Chase*, or *Merlin's Cave*. He was born in 1717, and received his musical education in the Chapel-royal. He was one of the singers in the Duke of Chandos' chapel at Cannons during the time that Handel resided with that munificent nobleman, and had a part in *Esther*, Handel's first oratorio, when it was originally performed there. After his appearance on the stage, he immediately became the favourite of the town, and for many years held a pre-eminent place among the English vocalists, taking the principal part in almost every musical piece which was performed.

In January, 1739, Beard married Lady Henrietta Herbert, only daughter of James, Earl of Waldegrave, and widow of Lord Edward Herbert, second son of the Marquis of Powis; a marriage which, of course, gave rise at the time to abundance of scandal. Lady Mary Wortley Montague, in one of her letters to Lady Pomfret, says, "Lady Harriet Herbert furnished the tea-tables here with fresh tattle for the last fortnight. I was one of the first informed of her adventure by Lady Gage, who was told that morning by a priest that she had desired him to marry her the next day to Beard, who sings in the farces at Drury Lane. He refused

her that good office, and immediately told Lady Gage, who (having been unfortunate in her friends) was frightened at this affair, and asked my advice. I told her honestly that since the lady was capable of such amours, I did not doubt, if this was broke off, she would bestow her person and fortune on some hackney-coachman or chairman; and that I really saw no method of saving *her* from ruin, and her family from dishonour, but by poisoning her; and offered to be at the expense of the arsenic, and even to administer it with my own hands, if she would invite her to drink tea with her that evening. But on her not approving that method, she sent to Lady Montacute, Mrs. Dunch, and all the relations within the reach of messengers. They carried Lady Harriet to Twickenham, though I told them it was a bad air for girls. She is since returned to London, and some people believe her married; others, that she is too much intimidated by Mr. Waldegrave's threats to dare to go through this ceremony; but the secret is now public, and in what manner it will conclude I know not. Her relations have certainly no reason to be amazed at her constitution, but are violently surprised at the mixture of devotion that forces her to have recourse to the church in her necessities; which has not been the road taken by the matrons of her family. Such examples are very detrimental to our whole sex, and are apt to influence the other into a belief that we are unfit to manage either liberty or money."

Lord Wharncliffe, in a note on this passage, says, "Lady Harriet Herbert, daughter of the last Marquis of Powis—she *did* marry Beard in spite of her relations. He was a singer at Vauxhall, and an actor in musical pieces at the theatre; but what was much worse, a man of very indifferent character."* His lordship here makes two mistakes.—Lady Harriet Herbert was not the daughter of the Marquis of Powis, but the widow of his son; and Beard's character was not only irreproachable, but excellent. According to every account of him, he was a man of liberal attainments, pleasing manners, good principles, and respectable conduct. Though Lady Harriet Herbert married so much beneath her degree, and against the consent of her family, the union did not prove an unhappy one. She died in 1753; and a handsome monument was erected to her memory by her husband in St. Pancras churchyard, on which it is recorded that, "On the 8th of January, 1738-9, she became the wife of Mr. John Beard, who, during a happy union of fourteen years, tenderly loved her person and admired her virtues; who sincerely feels and laments her loss; and must for ever revere her memory, to which he consecrates this monument."

In 1759 he married a daughter of Rich, on whose death he became one of the proprietors and acting manager of Covent Garden theatre. In

* Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, edited by Lord Wharncliffe, vol. ii. p. 218.

1768 he retired from the stage, and in 1791 he died, at the age of seventy-four. He spent his latter years in ease and affluence, in the society of many respectable friends whom he had gained by his estimable qualities and agreeable talents.

Beard was not only an excellent dramatic performer, but an eminent singer of sacred music, and for many years sustained the principal male part in Handel's oratorios. As a theatrical singer he had a rival in the person of Lowe, who enjoyed a considerable share of public favour. "With the finest tenor voice I ever heard in my life," says Burney, "for want of diligence and cultivation, Lowe could never be safely trusted with anything better than a ballad, which he constantly learned by his ear; whereas Mr. Beard, with an inferior voice, constantly possessed the favour of the public by his superior conduct, knowledge of music, and intelligence as an actor."*

Miss Arne, soon after she established her reputation as a singer by her performance of *Rosamond*, became the second wife of the celebrated, or rather notorious, Theophilus Cibber, to whom she was married in 1734. Cibber's own and his wife's emoluments, though very considerable, were insufficient to supply his extravagant expenses; and, soon after their marriage, the derangement of his affairs

* This comparison between Lowe and Beard may be applied to the two great modern English tenor-singers, Incledon and Braham.

rendered it necessary for him to retire to France. During his absence a *liaison* took place between Mrs. Cibber and a young gentleman of fortune, at which, after his return, he is said not only to have connived, but even to have been accessory to their correspondence. He was afterwards induced, however, to bring an action of *crim. con.* against the gentleman, laying his damages at 5,000*l* ; but the amount which he recovered (ten pounds) shows the sense which was entertained of his own conduct. This worthless and unhappy man was drowned in a shipwreck in 1758. The vessel in which he had embarked for Ireland was driven by stormy weather to the western coast of Scotland, where it was lost, and most of the crew and passengers perished. Mrs. Cibber remained on the Drury Lane stage till her death in 1760. When the intelligence of her death was communicated to Garrick, he gave her character in the following words: "Tragedy is dead with her: and yet she was the greatest female player belonging to my house. I could easily parry the artless thrusts, and despise the coarse language of some of my other heroines; but, whatever was Cibber's object, a new part or a new dress, she was always sure to carry her point by the force of her invective, and the steadiness of her perseverance." Her person is described by her biographers as having been perfectly elegant. Even when she had lost the bloom of youth, although she wanted that fulness of person which is frequently so effectual in

concealing the hand of time, it was impossible to contemplate her figure and face without thinking her both young and handsome. Her voice was naturally plaintive and musical; but its powers were such as to second her fine and striking features in the expression of the most violent as well as the most tender passions. She made some attempts in comedy, but with inferior success. As a singer, her natural gifts, and the cultivation they received from the tuition of her brother, were such, that she would have risen to the highest eminence, had she not turned her attention to the dramatic more than the musical part of her profession, and become one of the greatest of the English tragedians.

The greatest English female singer of this period was Miss Cecilia Young, who afterwards became the wife of Dr. Arne. She was a pupil of Geminiani, the celebrated composer and violinist, and made her first appearance at Drury Lane in 1730. "With a good natural voice and fine shake," says Burney, "she had been so well taught, that her style of singing was infinitely superior to that of any other Englishwoman of her time." Mrs. Arne was an Italian as well as an English singer, and her name appears in the operas of Handel, as well as in the English dramatic pieces of her time. She had two sisters, Isabella and Esther, both favourite vocalists. Isabella Young married Lampe, the composer. These three sisters were alive in 1789, when Burney published the last volume of

his history. Mrs. Arne is said to have died about the year 1795, when she must have been upwards of eighty.

In 1737, *The Dragon of Wantley* was first performed at Covent Garden. The piece was written by Henry Carey, and the music composed by Lampe. It is founded on the old ballad of Moore of Moorehall, and is an admirable burlesque of the Italian opera. The extravagant love, heroism, and fury of the Italian stage, are mimicked with great humour; and the songs, though ludicrous in the highest degree, are set in the Italian serious style of that day. The effect was heightened by the most absurd and fantastical costumes and ridiculous machinery; and the success of the piece was not inferior even to that of the *Beggar's Opera.* The piece was published, with a dedication by Carey to Lampe, in which he says, "Many joyous hours have we shared during the composition of this opera, chopping and changing, lopping, eking out, and coining of words, syllables, and jingle, to display in English the beauties of nonsense so prevailing in the Italian operas; this pleasure has been since transmitted to the gay, the good-natured, and jocular part of mankind, who have tasted the joke and enjoyed the laugh." The songs and duets were at the same time published by the composer.

The music of this "burlesque opera" (as it is called in the title) is excellent. It is admirably adapted to the words, on the supposition that they

are perfectly serious; and its great beauty and really pathetic expression give infinite zest to their grotesque absurdity. The melodies are spirited and graceful; and the orchestral score (consisting of the quartet of stringed instruments with the addition of two oboes) is clear and simple, yet very ingenious and full of charming effects.

The drama is made up of the usual elements of an Italian opera of that day. There is the famous Moore of Moorehall, the redoubtable dragon-killer as well as lady-killer; there are two damsels, both in love with him, and the slighted fair one, of course, full of jealousy and rage; and there is the terrible monster who falls before the victorious hero. We have here ample room for all the tragic passions of the *opera seria*. The character of Moore of Moorehall was sustained by Salway, a performer of whom we have no account; but, from his successful execution of the music of this part, he must have been a tenor-singer of considerable powers. The two inamoratas, Margery, the heroine, and Mauxalinda her rival, were represented by Isabella Young, (afterwards wife of the composer,) and Esther Young, her sister; and Reinhold, the bass-singer, was the Dragon.

The *aria* with which Moore of Moore-hall makes his *entrée*, is one of the finest bacchanalian songs to be found in English music. The words are,

> " Zeno, Plato, Aristotle,
> All were lovers of the bottle:

Poets, painters, and musicians,
Churchmen, lawyers, and physicians,
All admire a pretty lass,
All require a cheerful glass.
Every pleasure has its season;
Love and drinking are no treason."

These words are set with great boldness, breadth, and freedom; and the song would still be highly effective either on the stage or in the concert-room.

The fair Margery is spokeswoman of a deputation to petition the champion to rescue them from the devouring monster; and she addresses him in the following words, clothed with a lovely melody:

"Gentle knight, all knights exceeding,
Pink of prowess and good breeding,
Let a virgin's tears inspire thee,
Let a maiden's blushes fire thee.

For my father and my mother,
For my sister and my brother,
For my friends that stand before thee,
Thus I sue thee, thus implore thee,
Thus I kiss thy valiant garment,
Humbly hoping there's no harm in't."

Before the champion sets out on his enterprise, there is a tender *scena* between him and his mistress, in which there is this duet:

"*Moore.* Let my dearest be near me,
To warm me, to cheer me,
To fire me, inspire me
With kisses and ale.

Margery. I'll ever be near thee
To warm thee, to cheer thee,

To fire thee, inspire thee
With kisses and ale.

Moore. Your fears I'll abolish.
Marg. This dragon demolish.
Moore. I'll work him, I'll jerk him
From nostril to tail.
Marg. Ay, work him and jerk him
From nostril to tail."

The long roulade in both parts, on "wo—rk him," is whimsical in the extreme.

The two dulcineas fall by the ears in this fashion:

"*Margery and Mauxalinda,* Insulting gipsy,
You're surely tipsy,
Or *non te ipse,*
To chatter so.
Your too much feeding
Has spoil'd your breeding;—
Go, trollop, go!"

In this duet the Italian musical forms for expressing rage are amusingly introduced. Nothing can be more comic than the way in which the angry damsels reciprocate the epithet "trollop," and at last shout, at the same time, in each other's ears, "Go, trollop, go!" and, even in laughing at the absurdity of the effect, one cannot but be delighted with the cleverness and spirit of the music.

While the hero is gone to fight the dragon, the disconsolate Margery gives vent to her sorrows in a highly-wrought air, containing strong expression, striking modulation, and fine orchestral effects. Thus she sings:

"Sure my stays will burst with sobbing,
And my heart quite crack with throbbing;

My poor eyes as red as ferrets,
And I ha'n't a grain of spirits.
Oh, I would not for any money
This vile beast should kill my honey ;
Better kiss me, gentle knight,
Than with dragons fierce to fight."

The grand scene of the encounter between Moore of Moorehall and the dragon is evidently in ridicule of the combat between Hydaspes and the lion.* Moore addresses his antagonist in a dashing bravura :

" Dragon, dragon, thus I dare thee,
Soon to atoms thus I'll tear thee,
Thus thy insolence subdue.
But regarding where my dear is,
Then, alas, I know what fear is,
Gentle Margery, for you."

Moore utters this last piece of sentiment in a languishing *largo* movement, in the same manner as Hydaspes, after a bold defiance to the lion, tells him, in a similar tone, that he may lacerate his bosom, but shall not touch his heart, which he has preserved faithful to his mistress. The dragon, in reply, uses some coarse language (taken from the old ballad) in a fine rolling bass, and is then put to death *selon les regles.* There are several other fine things in the opera, particularly a cavatina, sung by the second woman :

" Oh, give me not up to the law,
I'd much rather beg on crutches ;

* See *ante,* vol. i. p. 263.

Once in a solicitor's paw,
You ne'er get out of his clutches."

This sentiment, equally just and pathetic, is conveyed in an expressive melody, accompanied only by the violoncello *obbligato*, in the manner which Handel, in some of his songs, borrowed from the cantatas of Alessandro Scarlatti.

This opera is one of the things which causes regret that so many fine productions of the olden time have fallen into oblivion. Were it once more brought upon the stage, the piece would be found very amusing, and the music exceedingly agreeable; and the principal parts would display to advantage the powers of our best vocal performers. It may be supposed that the zest of the satire is lost, because the Italian operas which were the immediate subjects of ridicule are long since forgotten. But Fielding's *Tom Thumb* has been acted for a century, though very few people know anything about the passages in the contemporary tragedies which are parodied in that inimitable piece of humour. In *The Dragon of Wantley*, the contrast between the ridiculous subject and the tragic pomp and circumstance with which it is treated, and between the grotesque words and the serious and expressive music—so much at variance with them, and yet so admirably adapted to them—with which they are clothed, would still produce its effect, while the beauty of the music would give pleasure to every person of taste.

In 1738 Carey brought out a sequel to the *Dragon of Wantley*, under the title of *Margery*. It was performed (says the *Biographia Dramatica)* with great applause at Covent Garden ; but we have not met with any other information respecting it. In 1739, he produced a musical piece called *Nancy, or the Parting Lovers ;* of the subject of which he gives the following account : " At the beginning of the late impress, the author saw a young fellow hurried away by a press-gang, and followed by his sweetheart, a very pretty wench, and perfectly neat though plain in her dress ; her tears, her distress, and moving softness, drew attention and compassion from all who beheld her." It was a pleasing and affecting little piece, and very favourably received. " The song, ' And canst thou leave thy Nancy ?' " says Dibdin, " shows that Carey's mind was musical. There is more genius in it than in many a laboured fugue."

This appears to have been the last of Henry Carey's productions. In 1743 he committed suicide, probably in consequence of embarrassed circumstances. He was a favourite of the public, yet always indigent, from which it may be concluded that he was improvident, like too many of the children of song ; though it does not appear that he was vicious or dissipated in his habits. The tenor of his life, in this respect, may be inferred from the tone of his songs and dramatic pieces, which, though lively and humorous, are remarkably free

from immorality. He was a musician as well as a dramatist and a poet. Without having acquired learning or skill in the art, he produced many pleasing and natural melodies. He wrote both the words and music of a very popular little piece called *The Honest Yorkshireman;* and the well-known "Sally in our Alley" is a pretty specimen of his talent as a writer and composer of ballads. "As a musician," says Sir John Hawkins, "Carey seems to have been the first of the lowest rank, and as a poet the last of that class of which Durfey was the first, with this difference, that in all the songs written on love, wine, and such kind of subjects, he seems to have manifested an inviolable regard for decency and good manners."

John Frederick Lampe, the composer of the *Dragon of Wantley*, was a Saxon. He arrived in England about the year 1726, and became known as a composer by his opera of *Amelia*, which has been already mentioned. Besides his dramatic pieces, he composed a great number of popular songs; and, in his attention to the emphasis and accent of English words, he may serve as a model even for our native musicians. In 1750 he went to reside at Edinburgh, and was much esteemed and respected by the patrons of music in that city; but in 1751 he was seized with an illness, of which he died at the age of fifty-nine.

In 1738, Arne established his reputation as a dramatic composer by his music to Milton's *Comus*.

This piece, as then revived, was considerably altered, and rendered more fit for representation, by Mr. John Dalton, a gentleman of some literary reputation, who died, in 1763, prebendary of Worcester and rector of St. Mary-at-Hill. He extended a good deal the musical portion of the piece, not only by the insertion of songs selected from Milton's other works, but by the addition of several of his own, which were very happily suited to the manner of the original author. The parts of Comus and of the second attendant spirit were performed by Beard; Euphrosyne by Mrs. Clive; and the *Lady* and pastoral nymph by Mrs. Arne.

The piece had a great run, and has since been revived at different periods with success. Further alterations were made upon it by Colman, in 1772. The dialogue was greatly mutilated, because it was found that moral lessons and descriptive passages, however beautiful and poetical in themselves, are cold and tedious on the stage. During the run of *Comus*, after its revival in 1738, Mr. Dalton sought out Milton's grand-daughter, Elizabeth Foster, who was then living in extreme old age and poverty. By his benevolent exertions, her illustrious ancestor's drama was performed for her benefit at Drury Lane, on the 5th April, 1750, by which she obtained above one hundred and thirty pounds. Garrick spoke a prologue written for the occasion by Johnson.

In *Comus*, Arne introduced a style of melody which may be said to be peculiarly his own; being

neither that of the older English masters, nor of the Italian composers of the day. It is graceful, flowing, and elegant; depending for its effect neither on the resources of harmony and uncommon modulation, nor on feats of vocal execution. It is, at the same time, very expressive, and finely adapted, not only to the spirit, but to the accentuation and prosody of the poetry. The music, too, is highly dramatic and characteristic. The careless jollity of Comus, the elegant voluptuousness of Euphrosyne, and the graceful simplicity and tenderness of the pastoral nymph, are finely expressed in the airs of these different personages; as, for example, in "Now Phœbus sinketh in the west," "By dimpled brook," and "How gentle was my Damon's air." And from the descriptions which we have of Beard, Mrs. Clive, and Mrs. Arne, they must have been admirable representatives of the characters.

But *Comus*, though a beautiful dramatic poem, is more suited to the closet than the stage; and the charming music of the piece, though it can no longer be heard in the theatre, ought still to give delight in the chamber or the concert-room.

From this time to the end of his career, Arne enjoyed an undisputed pre-eminence as an English dramatic composer; and yet it is a remarkable circumstance that only two of his operas, *Comus* and *Artaxerxes*, produced four-and-twenty years afterwards, had great success. Of his numerous pieces, composed during this interval, a very few obtained

a moderate share of popularity, while the remainder seem to have failed decidedly on the stage. Among those which had success were *The Jovial Crew*, *The Judgment of Paris*, *Eliza*, and *Thomas and Sally*. Among his failures may be enumerated *The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green*, *The fall of Phaeton*, *King Pepin's Campaign*, *Don Saverio*, *The Temple of Dulness*, *The Guardian Outwitted*, and *Achilles in Petticoats*. The indifferent success, or total failure, on the stage, of these pieces, was by no means imputable to the music, but to the dramas themselves, which were generally feeble and insipid. Arne, unfortunately, was too often his own poet; an art to which he had no vocation. The music, however, even of those operas which failed on the stage, was not altogether thrown away; for a great deal of it, when published, became generally popular; and many beautiful songs still continue in favour, though the pieces for which they were composed are entirely forgotten.

The Jovial Crew was one of Arne's early productions. When first brought out, Miss Rafter appeared in it; but it was afterwards performed with Miss Brent as the principal character, and her songs in the piece were published. They are very beautiful, especially the air, "See how the lambs are sporting," which is a fine specimen of Arne's simple English style. Nothing, we believe, is known of the piece, further than that it is an alte-

ration of Bromc's play with the same title into a three act opera.

The music of *The Judgment of Paris* was published in 1740; "as performed," says the title-page, "by Mr. Beard, Mr. Lowe, Mrs. Arne, Mrs. Clive, Miss Edwards, and others, at the theatre-royal Drury Lane;" and, of course, during the time of its performance at that theatre. Of the drama we can give no account; but had it been equal to the music, this opera ought to have been one of Arne's most successful works. The overture is by far the best of his instrumental compositions that we have met with. A short introduction leads into an excellent fugue, in which the subject and its counterpoints are inverted and treated with learning and skill, and yet with great freedom and simplicity of effect. This movement alone is sufficient to put an end to any question as to Arne's ability as a contrapuntist. There is then a free and graceful minuet; and the conclusion, after the fashion of the time, is an elegant *gigha*, a good deal in the style of Corelli. The scene in which the three goddesses contend, before Paris, for the palm of beauty, is admirable. Venus (originally personated by Mrs. Arne) first addresses him in a captivating air, "Hither turn thee, gentle swain," accompanied by the violoncello *obbligato*, in a manner that would make Lindley's fingers tingle with delight. This is followed by a trio for three soprano voices;

each of the goddesses importuning him—"Turn to *me*, for *I* am she." The manner in which the voices interrupt, respond to, and mingle with each other, is equally beautiful and dramatic, and must have had the additional charm of novelty at a time when such concerted pieces were almost unknown on the stage. Even now it would be a charming morceau in a concert-room. Paris replies to their solicitations in a song which ends thus;

"Apart let me view then each heavenly fair,
For three at a time there's no mortal can bear;*
And since a gay robe an ill shape may disguise,
When each is undrest
I'll judge of the best,
For 'tis not a face that must carry the prize."

From what follows it would seem that this condition was complied with, and that the three divinities stood before the Trojan shepherd in all their charms, as described in ancient story; though how our ancestors managed this piece of stage-effect is somewhat difficult to conjecture. Each goddess then addresses him separately. Juno sings the well-known "Let ambition fire thy mind;" and Pallas sings an inspiring war-song, accompanied with drums and trumpets. But Venus sings the delights of love; the allurements of ambition and war go for nothing; and the enraptured shepherd yields her the prize in a graceful and flowing tenor

* "For two at a time there's no mortal can bear."
Beggar's Opera.

song, (originally sung by Beard,) "Forbear, forbear, O goddess of desire." The whole of this scene is well worthy of the attention of our modern singers. It would display their finest qualities of voice and expression; and their exertions would be repaid by the pleasure which its novelty, (for what is forgotten becomes new,) as well as its beauty, would give any English audience.

Eliza was a long and (to judge from the words of the music) a dull piece, on the subject of the Spanish Armada. The principal character was Eliza (or queen Elizabeth) personated by Miss Isabella Young; and the chief songs are loyal and patriotic effusions suited to the occasion, but very far, we should suppose, from being interesting at such a distance of time from the period to which they relate. The piece, however, was enlivened by an underplot, in which pastoral and rustic characters were introduced. Some of the music is very beautiful, and long remained popular. The plaintive little ballad, "My fond shepherds of late," is still remembered with delight by many amateurs of the old school. The celebrated Miss Brent, then a pupil of the composer's, had a subordinate part in this piece.

Thomas and Sally is an interesting little opera, written by Bickerstaff. Its subject consists of the attempts by a country squire on the virtue of a maiden of low degree, who, after resisting his importunities and temptations, is at last rescued from

intended violence by her sweetheart, a young sailor. *Thomas and Sally* was favourably received; but some nautical critics objected to its sea-language as technically wrong. A sailor among the audience, hearing the expression, "Tack about and bear away," remarked, "Why that's as much as to say, go out at the door and up the chimney." This piece contains some sweet and touching ballads. It appeared in 1760.

Artaxerxes, the greatest of Arne's works, and the most celebrated English opera which has yet appeared, was first performed in 1762. The words are a poor translation, by the composer himself, of Metastasio's *Artaserse*; and the music is in the Italian style of the day. The dialogue is entirely in recitative; and many of the airs are filled with the phrases, divisions, and passages of execution, then fashionable on the Italian stage. The principal male character (*Arbaces*) was performed by an Italian soprano singer, the celebrated Tenducci; but it is now performed by English tenor singers. The part of *Artaxerxes*, personated by Peretti, another Italian soprano, has always been since represented by a female. The character of *Mandane* was performed by Miss Brent, who had by this time acquired great vocal powers; and *Artabanes* by Beard.

The success of this opera was not only extraordinary in the time of its novelty, but has been permanent in a singular degree. It has continued to

be performed down to the present time; and to succeed in the character of *Mandane* has been considered a test of the vocal powers of every female dramatic singer who has risen to eminence.

This success must be ascribed entirely to the attraction of the airs. The drama is feeble and insipid in the extreme, and never can have inspired any spectator with the slightest interest. The beauties of Metastasio have oozed out in the clumsy process of translation, and nothing remains but a bald, disjointed dialogue, which, besides, is rendered unintelligible by a sing-song Italian recitative, and flat, prosaic songs, the words of many of which are lost in the midst of a profusion of roulades and bravura passages.

The circumstance of the dialogue of *Artaxerxes* being wholly written in recitative has been considered as that which gives it, *par excellence*, the character of a legitimate English opera. Because such is the form of the Italian musical drama, it has been held that the same form is requisite in ours. But this does not follow. We must consult the genius of our language, which is not, like the Italian, fitted for the purposes of musical dialogue. The Italian language is in itself so musical, that recitative is very little more than the natural inflections and modulations of speech, heightened and reduced to determinate musical intervals. The level dialogue, accordingly, of the Italian opera, which, without expressing passion or emotion, is

necessary for carrying on the business of the drama, differs, if it is at all rapid, very little from ordinary speech, and can be followed by the audience. But this is peculiar to the Italian : no other language has accents and inflections belonging to it which, in the ordinary dialogue of the drama, can be heightened into recitative. Hence, when Arne and others have attempted to introduce this sort of musical dialogue into our opera, they have not had recourse to the natural music, (as it may be called,) or the accent and inflections of English speech, but have imitated the recitative of the Italian composers : and the consequence is, that, in listening to the dialogue of Artaxerxes, the actors all appear to be Italians, speaking broken English with the accent of their own tongue. English, moreover, not possessing the same facility of articulation as Italian, an English dialogue, if it is at all rapid, or composed of sentences of any length, cannot be delivered in recitative so as to be intelligible. The truth is, that nobody cares anything about the dialogue of *Artaxerxes;* and that it was so disregarded from the beginning, and even by the composer himself, may be inferred from the fact, that two of the principal parts were performed by Italians, Tenducci and Peretti, who certainly could not have carried on a dramatic dialogue in English with anything like clearness or propriety.

These remarks are applicable to *simple recitative,* or that in which the ordinary dialogue of an opera

is carried on. The higher species, called *accompanied recitative*, may be employed with effect in English, German, or French, as well as in Italian: because the inflections which denote emotion or passion are so strongly marked, that they may be converted into musical phrases. But here, again, the composers of these countries are accustomed to imitate the Italian recitative, instead of founding it on the peculiar character of their own language. In this, too, Arne has erred: and his accompanied recitative, as well as his simple, sounds more like Italian than English. Purcell, in this respect, was the model to have been followed: he having been the only English master who had founded a powerful and expressive recitative on the natural music of English speech.

Those, therefore, who demand recitative as an essential condition of the legitimate English opera, appear to take an erroneous view of the matter. Though *Artaxerxes* was greatly successful, yet every other attempt of the kind has failed, except (as in the case of the *Dragon of Wantley*) when it was for the purpose of burlesque. Artaxerxes has been successful in spite of its dialogue in recitative.*

* The celebrated Gretry, whose views of his art are the result of sound judgment and experience gained in his long and brilliant career as a dramatic composer, has given his opinion on this subject. After returning from Italy, where he had pursued his studies, and heard nothing but musical dialogue on the

The airs of this opera, on the other hand, were calculated to make a great and enduring impression on the public. It was Arne's object to introduce to the English stage a style of vocal composition and performance as yet new to it. The finish, refinement, and brilliant execution of the Italian school had been confined to the Italian opera-house ; and it was within its walls only that any English singers, who possessed these qualities, had obtained an opportunity of displaying them. For some time the English composers had been animated by a strong spirit of rivalry towards their Italian competitors, and had been attempting to draw the attention of the public to the national

stage, he could not, he says, at first accustom himself to the practice of singing and speaking in the same piece ; but he became convinced that it was the most reasonable. " Le poète a une exposition à faire, des scènes à filer, s'il veut établir ou developer un caractère. Que peut alors le recitatif ? Fatiguer par sa monotonie, et nuire à la rapidité du dialogue. Il n'y a que les jeunes poètes qui pressent trop leurs scènes, de peur d'être longs ; l'homme que connait mieux la nature, sait qu'on ne produit des effets qu'en les préparant et les amenant doucement jusqu' à leurs plus hauts degrés. Laissons donc parler la scène. Formons à la fois des comédiens déclamateurs et des musiciens chanteurs, sans quoi nos ouvrages dramatiques perdront le mérite qu'ils ont, et celui qu'ils peuvent encore acquérir. Je désirerais mettre en musique une vraie tragédie où le dialogue serait parlé ; j'imagine qu'elle produirait un plus grand effet que nos opéra chantés d'un bout à l'autre."—*Essais sur la Musique*, tom. i. p. 130.

musical stage. With this view they endeavoured to fight the enemy with their own weapons. "There were in England, at this time," says Burney, "several candidates for fame in theatrical and choral music; Arne, Lampe, Smith, Defesch, and Greene, tried their strength against Handel; but it was the contention of infants with a giant. Indeed they composed for inferior performers as well as inferior hearers; but they appear to have been so sensible of their own want of resources, that the utmost they attempted seems to have been an humble and timid imitation of Handel's style of composition. Arne began to distinguish himself by new-setting Addison's opera of *Rosamond;* Lampe by *Amelia*, an English drama written by Carey; and Smith by *Teraminta*, another opera written by the same author: these were all said, in the play-bills and advertisements, to be set *in the Italian manner*. Defesch set an oratorio called *Judith*, and Dr. Greene a *Te Deum* and part of the song of Deborah. These, though not very successful, contributed to diminish the public attention to Italian operas, and by that means injured Handel without effectually serving themselves."—In the course of these attempts to emulate the Italian school, the style of singing on the English stage underwent a great improvement. Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Arne, Miss Young, Mr. Beard, and lastly, Miss Brent, were accomplished vocalists, conversant with the

refinements as well as the difficulties of Italian performance, for which, too, the audiences of the English theatres had gradually begun to acquire a taste. It was in these circumstances, and with these means, that Arne, in composing *Artaxerxes*, endeavoured to contend with the Italian composers on their own ground, and to enable his singers to contend with their foreign rivals in their own style. He therefore made an English version of one of Metastasio's operas, and imitated the manner in which it had previously been set by the most eminent Italian composers, copying the structure of the scenes, the form of the recitatives, and the style of the airs, some of which are nothing more than strings of passages employed by Porpora, Hasse, Galuppi, Jomelli, and other Italian masters then in vogue. This is especially the case with the airs in the part of Mandane, which he wrote for his pupil Miss Brent, and into which, availing himself of her vocal powers, he crowded all the divisions and difficulties which had ever been heard at the Italian opera. Even in this age of brilliant execution, to sing the airs, "Fly, soft ideas," and "The soldier tired of war's alarms," with force, clearness, and ease, is a vocal feat of which very few, even of the most eminent vocalists, have shown themselves capable.

It was thus in *Artaxerxes* that English audiences, in English theatres, first enjoyed the luxury of that florid and ornate singing which seldom fails to

excite admiration and pleasure, even when it says nothing to the feelings. To the audiences of the English theatres, too, it had all the charm of novelty: for they were not aware that the brilliant displays of execution which so much surprised and delighted them, were common and hackneyed on the Italian stage. This, indeed, has been in a great measure the case almost to the present time; for the bulk of the audiences of our national theatres has always consisted of persons not in the habit of frequenting the Italian opera, and whose chief idea of bravura singing has been derived from the performance of Billington, or Stephens, or Paton, in this very opera of *Artaxerxes*. Now, however, that the music of all the foreign schools, Italian, German, and French, has become naturalised, as it were, among us, and daily heard in all our theatres, the old-fashioned finery of Arne has lost its power to dazzle or delight; and "The soldier tired" will never again be listened to with the rapture which it has so often produced.

It is not, then, in the great songs of this opera that its permanent beauties consist, but in the simple and unpretending airs in which Arne, following the impulse of his genius, and disregarding his Italian models, adhered to that natural English style so peculiarly his own. *Artaxerxes* cannot keep its place on the stage. There is nothing in it as a drama to interest and attract; and its antiquated structure, consisting of monotonous recita-

tives, interrupted only by airs, will not satisfy audiences accustomed to the brilliant and varied forms of the modern opera. The bravuras, too, will pass away, for the singers no longer need them for the purpose of displaying the agility of their throats. But those beautiful effusions of feeling, "In infancy our hopes and fears," "If o'er the cruel tyrant," and "Water parted from the sea," will long be prized among the purest gems of English melody.

Immediately after *Artaxerxes*, Arne composed the music of an opera called *The Birth of Hercules*, written by William Shirley, the author of a number of unsuccessful pieces. "It was rehearsed," says Dibdin, "but never performed. The music was extremely beautiful, but it would not probably have succeeded; it was not dramatic. The songs composed for Beard, Tenducci, Peretti, and Miss Brent, were of the first excellence. I was present at the rehearsal, and their effect will never be erased from my memory. It was withdrawn, as was generally understood, through some caprice of the author."

In 1763 appeared *Love in a Village*, written by Bickerstaff. This well-known opera is a lively and agreeable little comedy, the music of which consists of airs, and a few duets, mingled with the dialogue. These airs are partly selected from the Italian operas of the day, and partly composed by Arne, who probably adapted and arranged the whole, and pre-

pared the piece for publication. Several of Arne's airs are among the most beautiful of his compositions, particularly, "Ah, had I been by fate decreed," and "Gentle youth, ah, tell me why;" and "The traveller benighted" is a difficult bravura in the Italian style, which Mrs. Billington used to deliver with extraordinary brilliancy. *Love in a Village*, from its dramatic merit, as well as the beauty of the airs, still keeps its place on the stage.

In 1765, Arne was induced, by the success of his imitation of the Italian style in *Artaxerxes*, to compose an Italian opera, and he was further tempted by the opportunity of having the principal character performed by the celebrated Manzoli, then newly arrived in England. He chose the *Olimpiade* of Metastasio; but his attempt was a total failure. "The common playhouse and ballad passages," says Dr. Burney, "which occurred in almost every air in his opera, made the audience wonder how they got there. A tarnished Monmouth-street suit of clothes in the side-boxes would not have surprised them more. This production was performed but twice, and never printed. Many reasons may be assigned for the failure of a man of real genius, who had on so many occasions delighted the frequenters of our national theatres and public gardens: a different language, different singers, and a different audience and style of music from his own, carried him out of his usual element; and he mangled the Italian poetry,

energies, and accents nearly as much as a native of Italy just arrived in London would English, in a similar situation."—His failure showed that to copy the peculiarities of a foreign style, and to compose entirely in that style, are very different things.

After this period Arne produced no regular musical pieces, but his genius was not unemployed. When *King Arthur* was received in 1771, he made some additions to the music of Purcell, but without injuring or mutilating the work of that illustrious composer, whose genius Arne always regarded with reverence. He also made additions, in the same manner, to the music of *The Tempest*, among which is the charming air sung by Ariel, "Where the bee sucks," which is truly fairy music. He composed a number of songs for several of Shakspeare's plays, which are now inseparably united to them. Such are "When daisies pied" and "Under the greenwood tree," in *As you like it*. He also composed the music performed in Garrick's celebrated pageant in honour of Shakspeare, the Stratford Jubilee. His Vauxhall songs, and other fugitive productions, are innumerable.

Arne composed two oratorios, *Abel* and *Judith*, which were unsuccessful. "And yet," says Burney, "it would be unjust to say that they did not merit a better fate; for though the choruses were much inferior in force to those of Handel, yet the airs were frequently admirable." But Arne's strength was not equal to a contest with the gigantic power of

Handel. His degree of doctor of music was obtained from the University of Oxford, on the score of his merit as a composer of sacred music.

Arne died on the 5th of March, 1778. He had been educated in the principles of the Roman Catholic church; but, during a gay and somewhat dissipated life, had been negligent of the duties of religion. On his deathbed, however, his religious feelings were strongly awakened. He was attended by a priest, and died in a devout and penitent state of mind. It is said that he sang, with great fervour, a "hallelujah" about an hour before he expired. Notwithstanding his great talents and reputation, he was always in narrow circumstances, in consequence of his love of pleasure and improvident habits.

As an English dramatic composer, Arne must be considered as holding the next place to Purcell, and, from the popularity of his music, had a still greater influence on the taste of his countrymen. His melody is more uniformly sweet, flowing, and graceful, than that of Purcell; but he was far from possessing that illustrious man's grandeur of conception, deep feeling, and impassioned energy. He never fails to please, and often charms the hearer; but never dissolves him in tenderness, or rouses him with such spirit-stirring strains as those of Purcell. In *Artaxerxes* he was unable to rise to the lofty tone of musical tragedy. This opera, in truth, with all its merit, is a mixture of two different and in-

congruous styles, the one consisting of servile imitation of the Italian composers of the time, and the other being his own natural manner; a manner which, however sweet and beautiful, is wanting in grandeur and elevation. The gems of the opera are simple ballads, the familiar style of which would have suited a village-green better than the gorgeous precincts of the Persian court. The only really tragic music in the piece is to be found in the part of *Artabanes*, written for Beard, an energetic English singer. The air, "Behold, on Lethe's dismal strand," is a powerful composition; and it may be remarked that this song is one of the few instances in which Arne, in his translation, has caught the poetical spirit of the original.

"Behold, on Lethe's dismal strand,
Thy father's murder'd spirit stand;
In his face what grief profound!
See, he rolls his haggard eyes,
And hark! Revenge, revenge, he cries,
And points to his still bleeding wound."

Arne enjoyed the advantage over his great predecessor of writing in a more advanced age of orchestral composition. His harmonies are rich and varied, and he employed the instruments then in use with judgment and delicacy. Like the other composers of that day, the oboes are the wind instruments principally employed, in addition to the violins, violas, and basses. Considerable use is made of the flutes; and the clarinets (an instru-

ment beginning to be known) are introduced in two or three places. Arne certainly contributed to the improvement of instrumental accompaniment as well as of vocal melody.

During the time that Arne was at the head of our dramatic musicians, few operas of note were produced by any other composer. Perhaps the only one worthy of notice, besides those which have been already mentioned, is *The Chaplet*, a musical entertainment in one act, written by Moses Mendez, and composed by Dr. Boyce. The dialogue is in recitative, and it contains some beautiful airs and duets. This piece was very successful, and continued for a long time to be popular. The same author and composer produced another little piece called *The Shepherd's Lottery*, which also succeeded, but not in the same degree as *The Chaplet*.

For a considerable time after the appearance of *Artaxerxes*, our musical stage was chiefly supplied by means of *pasticcios* in the style of *Love in a Village*. Several of them were written by Bickerstaff, the author of that favourite piece. The best of them are *The Maid of the Mill*, and *Lionel and Clarissa*, both of which have considerable dramatic merit, and contain many beautiful airs selected from the works of the Italian composers. These operas, as well as *Love in a Village*, have kept possession of the stage, and are still occasionally revived. Being performed innumerable times in every theatre in the kingdom, and by all our best

dramatic singers, they contributed greatly to diffuse a taste for Italian melody. In all these pieces the part of the heroine was originally sustained by Miss Brent. This lady (as has been already mentioned) was a pupil of Dr. Arne. While her vocal abilities were as yet unknown to the public, Garrick wrote to Arne, expressing a wish to hear her. When he did so, he readily admitted her merit, but at the same time told Arne that "all his geese were swans." "Tommy," said he, "you should consider, after all, that music is at best but pickle to my roast beef."—"By —, Davy," rejoined Arne in the same strain, "your beef shall be well pickled before I have done." Miss Brent accordingly made her appearance at the rival theatre of Covent Garden in the *Beggar's Opera*, which was performed during the whole season with such success, that Drury Lane was nearly deserted, except on the nights when Garrick himself acted. His exertions to retrieve his losses on this occasion were of such injury to his health, that he went to Italy for its recovery. On his return, he found himself obliged (says the *Biographia Dramatica*) "to gratify the public taste by pickling his roast beef after Dr. Arne's method;" for which purpose he engaged, as a rival to Miss Brent, Miss Wright, who was afterwards married to Michael Arne, Dr. Arne's son.

Miss Brent married Thomas Pinto, a distinguished violinist, and, as Mrs. Pinto, long retained her celebrity. Dibdin, in his *History of the Stage*,

thus describes her as a vocal performer: "Mrs. Pinto, possessing an exquisite voice, and being under a master the great characteristics of whose musical abilities were natural ease and unaffected simplicity, was a most valuable singer. Her power was resistless, her neatness was truly interesting, and her variety was incessant. Though she owed a great deal to nature, she owed a great deal to Arne, without whose careful hand her singing might perhaps have been too luxuriant."

Michael Arne, Dr. Arne's son, was an able musician, and obtained considerable reputation from his opera of *Cymon*, which was produced at Drury Lane theatre in 1764. It was long popular; and some of the airs, particularly "Yet awhile, sweet sleep," and "The sweet passion of love," are not yet forgotten. He was addicted to the study of chemistry, and was subject to the infatuation (a strange one in the eighteenth century) of believing in the philosopher's stone. He built a laboratory at Chelsea, and spent his money in the pursuit of this chimera; but recovering his senses before he was ruined, he returned to his professional avocations, and was a prolific composer of songs and ballads for the theatres and other places of musical entertainment.

CHAPTER IV.

State of the Italian opera in the middle of the last century—Structure of an opera—Recitative—Various classes of airs—Changes effected by composers—Jomelli.

We have already traced the progress of the Italian opera to the middle of the last century. At that time it had established itself in Germany and England, where it had become the favourite musical entertainment of the higher classes of society. In England, too, it had produced some effect on the form and character of our own national opera, and on the style of English composition and performance. This effect does not seem to have been produced in Germany, in which country it can hardly be said that there was as yet any national opera; all the great native dramatic musicians being disciples of the Italian school, and occupied in composing for the Italian stage. In France the Italian opera had obtained no footing whatever; the state of music in that kingdom still remaining nearly as it has been described in a previous chapter.

From this period, however, the Italian school exercised a much greater and more immediate in-

fluence on the national musical drama of all these countries than it had previously done.

By the middle of the last century, the Italian opera, both in its poetry and music, had been gradually brought to a state of great polish and refinement, and had come to assume a certain form, and to be constructed according to a model from which no deviation was permitted.

In the structure of an opera the number of characters was generally limited to six, three of each sex; and, if it was not a positive rule, it was at least a practice hardly ever departed from, to make them all lovers;—a practice, the too slavish adherence to which introduced feebleness and absurdity into some of the finest works of Metastasio. The principal male and female singers were, each of them, to have airs of all the different kinds which we shall presently describe. The piece was to be divided into three acts, and not to exceed a certain number of verses. It was required that each scene should terminate with an air; that the same character should not have two airs in succession; that an air should not be followed by another of the same class; and that the principal airs of the piece should conclude the first and second acts. In the second and third acts there should be a *scena*, consisting of an *accompanied* recitative, an air of execution, and a grand duet sung by the hero and heroine. There were occasional choruses; but trios and other concerted pieces were unknown,

except in the *opera buffa*, where they were beginning to be introduced.

The *recitative* was divided into the two classes of *simple* and *accompanied;* a distinction which has already been explained.

The *air* was divided into several kinds; and the classification then formed being by no means arbitrary, but founded on principles of taste, still subsists. In explaining this classification, we shall avail ourselves of Dr. Brown's elegant treatise on the poetry and music of the Italian opera.

The first and highest class is the *aria cantabile*, so called by pre-eminence, as if it alone were entitled to the name of song: and indeed it is the only kind of song which gives the singer an opportunity of displaying all his powers of every description. The proper objects of this kind of air are sentiments of tenderness; and its proper expression is a pleasing sadness. Hence the *aria cantabile*, while it is susceptible of great pathos, admits of being highly ornamented, because, though the sentiments it expresses are affecting, they are such as the mind dwells on with pleasure: and, for the same reason, the subject of the *cantabile* should never border on deep distress nor approach to violent agitation, both of which are evidently inconsistent with ornament. The motion of this air is very slow, and its constituent notes (or those which belong essentially to the unembellished melody) proportionally long. These notes are in general very few,

simple in their progression, and so arranged as to allow great scope to the skill of the singer. In this kind of song the instrumental accompaniments are restricted to almost nothing; the accompaniment being merely sufficient to support the voice, and kept so subordinate as never to interfere with it, or attract attention.

The *aria di portamento* derives its name from the term which expresses the carriage or sustaining of the voice. It is composed chiefly of long notes, such as the singer can dwell on, and have thereby an opportunity of displaying the beauties of his voice and calling forth its powers; for the beauty of sound itself, and of vocal sound in particular, as being the finest of all sounds, is held by the Italians to be one of the chief sources of the pleasure derived from music. The subjects proper for this class of air are sentiments of dignity, but calm and undisturbed by passion. The subject of the *portamento* is too grave and serious to admit of that degree of ornament which is essential to the *cantabile*. To illustrate (says Brown) the specific difference of these two classes, I might say that were Venus to sing, her mode of song would be the *cantabile;* the *portamento* would be that of the queen of gods and men.

The *aria di mezzo carattere* is a species of air, which, though expressive neither of the dignity of the *portamento* nor of the pathos of the *cantabile*, is, however, serious and pleasing. There may be an

almost infinite variety of touching and interesting sentiments, which are not, nevertheless, of sufficient importance to be made the subject of airs of the above classes: for these the *aria di mezzo carattere* is calculated. From the great variety which this air consequently embraces, as well as from the less emphatic nature of the sentiments which it is employed to convey, its general expression is not so determined as that of the former classes; yet, with respect to each individual air, the expression is far from being vague or dubious: and though some greater latitude be here granted to the fancy of the composer, nothing is given to his caprice, the sense of the words clearly defining the expression in point both of quality and degree. Thus this class of airs, while it retains its own particular character, may by turns have some affinity with all the other classes. But while its latitude is great in respect to variety, it is obviously much limited with regard to degree. It may be soothing but not sad—pleasing but not elevated—lively but not gay. The movement of this air is by the Italians termed *andante*, which is the medium of musical time between the extremes of slow and quick. In this species of air the orchestra, though it ought never to cover the voice, is not kept in such subordination to it as in the classes already described. It is not only allowed to play louder, but may be more frequently introduced by itself, and may on the whole contribute more to the general effect of the air.

The *aria parlante*, or speaking air, admits neither of long notes in its composition, nor of many ornaments in its performance. The rapidity of its movement is determined by the force of the passion which it expresses. This species of air sometimes goes by the name of *aria di nota e parola*, and of *aria agitata*. It may be said to take up expression where the *aria di mezzo carattere* leaves it. Some airs of this last class, of the liveliest kind, may approach indeed so near to some of the *parlante* airs of the least agitated cast, that it might be difficult to say to which class they belonged. But as soon as the expression begins to be in any degree impetuous, the distinction is evident: as the degree of passion to be expressed increases, the air assumes the name of *aria agitata*, *aria di strepito*, *aria infuriata*. Expressions of fear, of joy, of grief, of rage, when at all impetuous, even to their most violent degrees, are all comprehended under the various subdivisions of this class. Their rhythm has its peculiar province; the effect of this kind of air depending chiefly on its powers. The instrumental parts are likewise of great efficacy, particularly in the expression of the more violent passions; giving, by the addition of a great body of sound, and by the distinctness and rapidity of their execution, a force and energy to the whole which never could be produced by the voice alone. It is observed by Rousseau, that as violent passion has a tendency to choke the voice, so, in the expression

of it by musical sounds, a *roulade*, which is a succession of notes rapidly uttered upon one vowel, has often a more powerful effect than distinct articulation. It is into airs of this kind that such passages are commonly introduced.

The *aria di bravura*, or *aria d'agilità*, is that which is composed chiefly—indeed too often merely—to afford the singer an opportunity of displaying extraordinary powers of voice and execution. Though this kind of air may sometimes be introduced without impropriety, and even with some effect, yet, in general, the means are here confounded with the end. Such airs too frequently serve no other purpose than that of astonishing the ignorant, while they make the judicious grieve.

These are the various classes of airs recognised by the Italian poets, musicians, and critics. Dr. Brown has added another, suggested by himself, which he calls *airs of imitation;*—airs in which the music describes or imitates the appearances of nature. He cites, as an instance, the air "Hush, ye pretty warbling choir," in Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, in which he says, "while the vocal part most feelingly speaks the passion, a little flageolet from the orchestra carries on, throughout, the delightful warbling of the choir:" and he adds, that this species of imitation must never be given to the voice, but always to the orchestra. This is sufficient to show that there can be no such thing as airs of imitation, considered as a separate class.

How can an air derive its name, as belonging to a class, from a circumstance excluded from air altogether? How can "Hush, ye pretty warbling choir," be called an air of imitation, when the *air* does not contain a vestige of imitation? The air might have been exactly what it is, without any accompaniment for the flageolet. This air, in truth, is just an *aria di mezzo carattere;* or (according to Dr. Brown's description of that class) an air containing an expression of feeling not sufficiently strong to be made the subject of the *cantabile* or the *portamento*, and in which the accompaniment is so important as to contribute to the general effect of the air.

It is a principle which has been uniformly acknowledged and acted upon by the Italian composers, that expression only is the province of the voice, and that every thing like description or imitation is excluded from it: and it is for this reason that imitation or description has not been admitted by them as a characteristic of any class of airs. The following lines of Metastasio are beautifully descriptive;—

"L'aura, che tremola
Tra fronda e fronda;
L'onda, che mormora
Tra sponda e sponda,
E meno istabile
Del vostro cor."

But how is the singer to represent these images?

By what shakes, what roulades, what modulations of voice, is he to paint the soft trembling of the breeze among the leaves, or the murmuring of the rivulet between its banks? Any such attempt at musical mimicry would only excite laughter. The same thing would be the consequence, were he to mimic the roaring of a stormy sea, the rolling of thunder, the howling of wild beasts, or the notes of birds: and we have already had occasion, more than once, to point out the unhappy and ridiculous effects sometimes produced in serious compositions, even by great masters, when they happened to lose sight of this important principle. But all these imitative effects, thus absolutely forbidden to the voice, may be produced, with equal propriety and beauty, by the accompanying instruments. Every composer, accordingly, who has set the above air, has so treated it; and it obviously falls under the class of the *aria di mezzo carattere.*

Imitative passages for the instruments may be employed to heighten the effect of every kind of air, even the most impassioned that can be imagined. Suppose Lear, by the cruelty of his daughters, exposed, on the barren heath, to the "pelting of the pitiless storm," were to vent in song the passions which distracted his soul—

> ———" The tempest in my mind
> Doth from my senses take all feeling else,
> Save what beats there.—Filial ingratitude!
> Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
> For lifting food to't?—But I will punish home:—

No, I will weep no more.—In such a night
To shut me out! —Pour on, I will endure: —
In such a night as this! O Regan, Goneril!
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all!
O, that way madness lies—let me shun that—
No more of that!"

His accents would be the cry of suffering nature and agonised feeling: but the genius of a Beethoven would present to the imagination the horrors of the scene—the blackness of the night, and the tempest howling round the head of the desolate old man,—by the gloomy harmonies and appalling sounds proceeding from the orchestra, and mingling in wild confusion with the voice of the actor. The song would express the passions of the man; the instruments would paint his situation.

We are inclined, therefore, to believe, that the Italian classification of the different kinds of vocal melody is complete, and incapable of being extended. It is founded entirely upon expression; for, even in the *aria di bravura*, brilliancy of execution is looked upon only as one of the means of expression. Whenever the means are substituted for the end, and the air has no other object than the display of agility, then it forfeits its claim to be considered as legitimate melody of any class. The classification in question contains the elements of every kind of vocal expression. These elements, indeed, are now more blended than formerly; the division of entire airs into their various classes is less strict, and an

extended air of modern date may contain the elements of different classes: and yet these elements are in themselves indestructible, and every piece of legitimate melody, however varied or complicated, may be resolved into them. If many things called airs, in the Italian operas of the present vitiated school, are incapable of being resolved into these primary elements of expression, it is because they are made up of an unmeaning jargon unworthy of the name of melody.

The Italian opera having assumed the form which has now been described, preserved it, with little alteration, for a considerable time. But the spirit of change was constantly at work. The influence of the German school, both in respect to vocal harmony and instrumental accompaniment, began to be perceptible in the style of the Italian composers; the airs were no longer composed with the same adherence to established models; and the dramatic structure of the scenes acquired a variety of new forms by the introduction of concerted pieces and finales.

These changes were gradually effected by a body of composers who may be classed as contemporarics, and as being a generation immediatcly succeeding that which extended down to the middle of the last century. Among these composers the first in order is Jomelli, who, indeed, might have been classed likewise in the preceding generation, as he

had arrived at great eminence before the middle of the century. But it was after that period that his long residence in Germany produced a change in his style, which, though unfavourably received by his countrymen, had a material influence on the style of his successors.

Nicolo Jomelli was born at Aversa, a small town near Naples, in the year 1714. His taste for music, as has been generally the case with great composers, manifested itself at an early age, and he learned the rudiments of music almost in his infancy. He was then placed in one of the conservatories of Naples, where he received instructions from the celebrated, Leonardo Leo. Soon after he quitted this seminary, his master happened to hear a cantata of his composition performed at the house of a friend, and was so transported with pleasure that he exclaimed, that the young man, in a few years, would be the admiration of all Europe;—a prediction which was soon realised. Jomelli was only three-and-twenty when his first opera, *L'Errore Amoroso*, was performed at Naples; and in the following year his *Odoardo* was produced in the same city. Such was the reputation which he obtained by means of these works, juvenile as they were, that in 1740 he was invited to Rome, where he composed two operas, *Ricimero* and *Astianatte;* the former of which was received with such enthusiasm, that the composer was carried in triumph from the

orchestra, where he had conducted the performance, to the stage, that he might receive the plaudits of the audience.

In 1741 he went to Bologna, where he composed his opera of *Ezio*. Soon after his arrival he visited the famous Padre Martini, the most learned contrapuntist of his time; and, without making himself known, requested to be admitted among Martini's pupils. Martini, according to the usual practice, gave him a subject for a fugue, desiring him to work it out, in order to discover what his intended scholar knew, and what he required to learn. Jomelli set to work on the spot, and developed the fugue with such facility, and in so masterly a manner, that the veteran, struck with surprise, exclaimed, "Who are you? You are making game of me; you should be the master, and I the scholar!" Jomelli answered, that he was the young composer employed to write the opera about to be performed at the theatre, and begged Martini's countenance and counsels. The request was willingly granted; and Jomelli afterwards said that he had received much valuable instruction from this great master.

After remaining several years at Bologna, Jomelli returned to Rome, where his *Didone* was produced with even greater success than *Ricimero*. Its merits were the theme of unbounded praise; and his fame was now so great that his countrymen, the Neapolitans, eagerly called on him to return home, that they, too, might have the satisfaction of

applauding and rewarding his genius. He complied with a desire so flattering to himself: and, soon after his arrival at Naples, produced his *Eumene*, which completely satisfied the highly-raised expectations of the public.

His next journey was to Venice, a city whose suffrage was of the highest importance to the reputation of a musical artist. He there composed his *Merope;* and the government, as a mark of admiration of his talents, appointed him master of the conservatory for girls. In 1749 he again visited Rome, where a different reception awaited him. His *Armida* was performed; but, from some cause not easily accounted for, a hostile spirit had been excited against him; and, on his appearing in the chestra, he was received by the audience with such a storm of disapprobation, that, in the fear of personal violence, he was obliged to make a precipitate retreat from the theatre; and he took his departure from Rome the same night. It is said that this violent animosity was stirred up against him by the intrigues of some of his fellow musicians, in consequence of his having endeavoured to obtain the situation of *maestro di capella* of St. Peter's; a step which the public were taught to consider as an unpardonable piece of presumption on the part of so young a man, though he was now five-and-thirty. There was probably some foundation for the opinion, that neither his years nor education were sufficient to qualify him for an office requiring

great learning and long experience; but the Romans took a preposterous way of expressing it. This check, however, is said to have induced him to apply himself assiduously to the study of counterpoint and the most profound branches of his art, especially the department of ecclesiastical composition, in which he surpassed all his Italian contemporaries, and has never, indeed, been rivalled by any of his successors.

Immediately after he thus quitted Rome, he repaired to Vienna, where Metastasio was then in the height of his fame and influence. On his arrival in that capital, he produced his *Achille in Sciro*, which met with the most complete success. The illustrious poet found in Jomelli a kindred soul; and mutual admiration and esteem formed the basis of a warm and permanent friendship between them. In a letter from Metastasio to Farinelli, written in November 1749, soon after Jomelli's arrival at Vienna, the poet thus speaks of him: "Jomelli is about thirty-five years of age, of a spherical figure, pacific disposition, with an engaging countenance, most pleasing manners, and excellent morals. He has surprised me. I have found in him all the harmony of Hasse, with all the grace, expression, and invention of Vinci." In another letter to the same correspondent he says: "Jomelli is the best composer for words, of whom I have any knowledge. It is true that he is too much given to repetition, but this is the epidemic malady of Italy, of which

he will soon be cured. He has sometimes restrained the caprice and invention of singers.—If ever you should see him," Metastasio adds, "you will be attached to him, as he is certainly the most amiable *gourmand* that ever existed."

Jomelli having received a commission from Farinelli to compose a piece for the court of Spain, Metastasio wrote to Farinelli, in August 1750, a letter which contains his opinion of the musical taste then prevalent in Italy. "Our good and admirable Jomelli," says Metastasio, "is out of his wits to execute your commission well. He has written me a long letter, in which he talks of nothing else. I am very anxious that he should please the public of Spain. For your part, who judiciously love harmony and expression, I have no doubt of your approbation. But in Italy, at present, there is a taste for nothing but extravagance and vocal symphonies, in which we sometimes hear an excellent violin, flute, or oboe, but never the voice of a human creature: so that music is intended now to excite no other emotion but that of surprise. Things are carried to such an excess, that if not soon reformed, we shall justly become the buffoons of all other nations. Composers and performers being ambitious only of tickling the ears, without ever thinking of the hearts of the audience, are generally condemned, in every theatre, to the disgraceful office of degrading the acts of an opera into *intermezzi* for the dances, which occupy the

chief attention of the spectators. And it is to *you*, my good master, that this degeneracy is owing. It is your happy and wonderful powers, which all are striving in vain to emulate. But even to limp after you requires legs such as none are gifted with." It appears that Jomelli had failed to execute the commission given him, and that Farinelli had complained of his conduct to Metastasio; for, in January 1751, the poet writes thus: "If you knew Jomelli personally, you would not wonder at the indolence of which you complain. He has a tranquil and serene mind, and loves to lounge about at his ease, and indulge the fatness of his well-fed body, giving way to every impulse that can save him the trouble of resistance; so that he is always under the influence of those who are about him. Grieve at this on your own account if you will, or rather deplore in him this unlucky fault, but never believe that he meant to deceive you. A fraud would involve his easy temper in too much trouble."

During his residence in Vienna, Jomelli composed the music of several of Metastasio's operas, particularly *Didone* and *Achille in Sciro*, which were received with enthusiasm by the public. During his whole life, indeed, in his dramatic labours, he employed himself almost exclusively on the works of his illustrious friend.

In 1751 he returned to Rome, the people of which had forgotten, or were perhaps ashamed of their former hostility towards him. Soon afterwards he

was appointed *maestro di capella* of St. Peter's, an office to which he could now aspire without being accused of presumption. In a letter written at this period, Metastasio says: "At present he is *maestro di capella* of St. Peter's at Rome, and is the delight of that city, not only for his professional abilities, but for his complacency, good temper, propriety of deportment, and good morals." At this time he composed much sacred music for the choir of St. Peter's, and many of his operas.

The greatness of Jomelli's reputation now induced the Duke of Wurtemburg, one of the greatest connoisseurs of the time, to invite him, on very advantageous terms, to settle at his court. Jomelli accepted the proposal, and resided at Stutgard for nearly twenty years, during which time he produced a great number of works for the church, the theatre, and the chamber.

During this long residence in Germany, his style gradually underwent a change. He acquired a relish for the full harmony and elaborate mode of composition for which the German school has always been remarkable; and the alteration in his manner excited the regret and censure of Metastasio, whose taste seems not to have been at all affected by his having spent a large portion of his life in the Austrian capital. This appears from the following interesting letter, addressed by Metastasio to Jomelli, in April 1765.

"And does my admirable Jomelli, then, remember

me? The confirmation of this truth, which, however, in spite of your eternal silence, I never doubted, has afforded me a pleasure I am unable to describe. Indeed I am so much the more delighted with your last dear letter of the 3rd of March, as I had so long in vain tried to procure it; having sent you some time ago my *Alcide in Bivio* by M. de Rois, and since that, written you a long epistle which ought to have been forwarded to you by Signora Scotti, at present the *prima donna* of the opera in England, who, on quitting this place, set out for London. But either my couriers have been to blame, or my despatches ineffectual; and yet I am so sure of your affection, that whatever may happen I shall never doubt it.

"I regard the two masterly airs with which you have so kindly favoured me as precious gifts; and, as far as the limits of my musical knowledge extend, I have admired the new and harmonious texture of the voice and accompaniments, the elegance of the one, the contrivance of the other, and the uncommon unity of the whole, which render them worthy of your abilities. I must confess, however, my dear Jomelli, that though this style impresses me with respect for the writer, you have, when you please, another which instantly seizes on the heart, without giving the mind the trouble of reflection. When I have heard a thousand times your airs "Non so trovar l'errore," and "Quando sarà quel dì," with innumerable others which I cannot now recollect, that are still more captivating, they leave

me no longer master of myself, but make me feel all that you must have felt in composing them. Ah, my dear Jomelli, do not abandon a faculty in which you have not, nor ever will have, a rival. In masterly airs there may be composers, perhaps, who by dint of pains and labour will approach you; but in finding their road to the hearts of others, their own must be formed of fibres as delicate and sensitive as yours. It is true that, in writing in this new style, you cannot help sometimes expressing the passions in the way which your own happy temperament suggests; but being obliged, in order to support your learned idea, too frequently to interrupt the voice, the impressions already made on the mind of the hearer are effaced; and for the reputation of a great master, you neglect that of an amiable and most powerful musician."

In 1768 Jomelli returned to his native country, and resumed his musical labours at Naples, from which he had been so long absent. Immediately on his return, he found that the style of composition which he had acquired in Germany—his full and complicated harmony, and adherence to the old rules of elaborate counterpoint, were not favourably received by his countrymen. He appears to have expressed his chagrin on this account to his old master, the venerable Padre Martini, of Bologna, from whom his complaints drew the following letter, written in March 1768.

"My dear Jomelli,—I was a good deal grieved on reading the contents of your letter from Naples.

You complain of the injustice that has been done to your music at the theatre San Carlo, after its having received so many and such flattering marks of approbation throughout the rest of Europe: but allow me to say, that you wrong yourself in making such a complaint. You would, perhaps, have done well to bear in mind the parting advice which I gave you when you were on the point of setting out for Vienna, and asked me for some hints that might prove useful to you in the musical career on which you were about to enter. I told you that one of the principal points to which a composer ought to direct his attention, was to win the affections and engage the feelings of his hearers. I told you, that as men vary in their dispositions and passions according to the variety of climates, forms of government, and modes of education, you should begin by studying the character of the nation for which you write, and aim to adapt your melodies and accompaniments to the national taste of the country. And lastly, I told you that old rules should not be allowed to fetter the native energies of genius, and that nothing was more important than occasionally to give a loose rein to the sallies of an ardent imagination. I have read over your music: I have no fault to find with it, except, perhaps, your strong tone of colouring, which, as you do not give sufficient attention to the *chiar oscuro*, the finer gradations of tint necessary to a finished piece, gave me, I must confess, some moments of

annoyance. I am an old man. I observe that the predominant characteristics, the physiognomy, if I may so express it, of the age, is changed, and that the old style will no longer have any chance of success: in a word, that he who possesses the happy art of accommodating himself to the spirit of the times will bear away the palm. Let me request you to bear in mind the famous saying of St. Paul, that 'we are debtors to the learned and the unlearned;' for it would be chimerical to hope to live in a land of doctors. It should therefore be our aim so to please the learned as not to disgust the unlearned.

"Last year, some of my people took it into their heads to perform one of my masses in the church of San Antonio at Padua. I did all in my power to dissuade them, but to no purpose; I was obliged to give way to their well-meant zeal. But what did I do as a *dernier ressort?* Why, my dear Jomelli, I contrived to leave out a good portion of the *Kyrie* and two considerable passages of the *Gloria*, in order to save both myself and others from *ennui*. I will not say a word of the good-nature of the audience, who, out of respect to my age, and to the, perhaps, not unhonoured remembrance of my youth, were induced to applaud: but it was done pretty much in the style of a dead body raising its hand under a galvanic operation. I had never any pretensions to the title either of a learned man or a poet, but I was always fond of the maxim *utile dulci*.

Pray do not disdain to follow my example, and I will answer for it you will be satisfied with the result. A majestic, grand, and impressive overture, an introduction founded on the strict rules of counterpoint, a melody without much accompaniment, —these form the admiration of the learned, of ancient matrons, and sage *dilettanti;* but the plain and unlearned will have noise, otherwise they fall asleep. What then is to be done? Why, have recourse to the horn, the drum, the cymbal, and the trombone. This will awake them; this will throw them into raptures: nothing will do but that thundering harmony which seems to invite to battle, and to rouse the sluggish blood to deeds of death. This is the presiding genius of our age, and will, perhaps, become still more so in that which is to follow. The learned will blame the composer as they please, but the ignorant will not fail to shout, *Viva il maestro!*—the master for ever!

"Aristarchus pronounced a severe censure on those unlearned and inharmonious souls, who, in his day, presumed to pass their judgment upon musicians. Yes, even in those early days, musicians had learned the art of gaining the favour of the many, unawed by the censures of the few. As to yourself, my friend, the learned will not deny that you can write in the old style, if you choose: the half-learned will, if you humour them, greet you with the title of their *magnus Apollo;* but, what

is of more solid importance, you will not only be well received but well paid. Dear Jomelli, be advised by your old master. Follow the path which he points out to you! and let the Aristarchuses talk on as they may. Heaven preserve you, and farewell."*

Dr. Burney, who visited Naples in October 1770, says:† "This morning I first had the pleasure of seeing and conversing with Signor Jomelli, who arrived at Naples from the country but the night before. He is extremely corpulent, and in the face not unlike what I remember Handel to have been, yet far more polite and soft in his manner. I found him in his night-gown, at an instru-

* We find this interesting letter in *The Harmonicon* for 1826, translated from an Italian journal, in which it had recently appeared. "Would not one be led," says *The Harmonicon*, "to imagine that the good Padre Martini was gifted with the spirit of propheey, and, looking into the future, had seen the composers and the orchestras of the nineteenth century? What would he have said had he seen the composers of our times, not content with employing to excess the drum and the trumpet in the orchestra, transporting them as often as an opportunity will allow upon the stage itself. persuaded, as it would seem, that noise is effect, and that to enrapture and to stun are synonymous? Hence, within these few years, how many amateurs are there whom the opera seems to have rendered deaf!"—It is easy to perceive the supreme contempt which the venerable musician entertained for the style which he was counselling Jomelli, from worldly considerations, to adopt.

† *State of Music in France and Italy.*

ment, writing. He received me very politely, and made many apologies for not having called on me in consequence of a card which I had left at his house; but apologies were indeed unnecessary, as he was but just come to town, and at the point of bringing out a new opera, that must have occupied both his time and thoughts sufficiently."

This opera was *Demofoonte*, which was performed a few days afterwards. "I went," says Burney, "to the first representation of Signor Jomelli's opera of *Demofoonte*, in the grand theatre of San Carlo. It is not easy to imagine or describe the grandeur or magnificence of this spectacle. It being the great festival of St. Charles, and the king of Spain's name-day, the court was in grand gala, and the house was not only doubly illuminated but amazingly crowded with well-dressed company. Yet, with all this, it must be owned that the magnitude of the building and noise of the audience are such, that neither the voices nor instruments can be heard distinctly. I was told, however, that, on account of the king and queen being present, the people were much less noisy than on common nights. There was not a hand moved by way of applause during the whole representation, though the audience in general seemed pleased with the music: but, to say the truth, it did not afford me the same delight as at the rehearsal; nor did the singers, though they exerted them-

selves more, appear to equal advantage. Not one of the present voices is sufficiently powerful for such a theatre, when so crowded and so noisy. Signora Bianchi, the first woman whose sweet voice and simple manner of singing gave me and others so much pleasure at the rehearsal, did not satisfy the Neapolitans, who have been accustomed to the force and brilliancy of a Gabrielli, a Teiber, and a De Amici. There is too much simplicity in her manner for the depraved appetites of these *enfans gâtés*, who are never pleased but when astonished. As to the music, much of the *clair-obscure* was lost, and nothing could be heard distinctly but the noisy and furious parts which were meant merely to give relief to the rest: the mezzotinto and back-ground were generally lost, and indeed little was left but the bold and coarse strokes of the composer's pencil."

Jomelli was much mortified by the cold reception of this opera, and, in the hope of regaining the favour of the public, exerted all his powers in the composition of his *Ifigenia in Aulide*. But this work was hastily got up and badly performed; and, notwithstanding its great beauties, experienced a total failure. He was so much affected by this misfortune that he was struck with palsy; from which he recovered so much as to be able to compose his sublime *Miserere*, the last and greatest of his works, the words of which are taken from

Saverio Mattei's translation of the fifty-first Psalm. But the blow was fatal; and he died on the 28th of August, 1774, at the age of sixty.

Mattei, the celebrated poet and critic who has just been mentioned, in a memoir of Jomelli contained in his *Saggio di Poesie Latine ed Italiane*, thus speaks of him as a man and a musician:

"Jomelli was my friend: he lived two years in my neighbourhood, and I had frequent opportunities of conversing with him, and of admiring his captivating manners, particularly his modesty in speaking of rival artists, whose compositions he readily praised, though their authors were not equally candid in speaking of him.

"Jomelli had acquired considerable knowledge in other arts besides music. His poetry was full of taste, and there is a fine ode of his writing, in the collection published at Rome, on the subject of the reconciliation between the pope and the king of Portugal.

"He was ambitious of distinguishing himself from other composers in a way peculiar to himself. His invention was always fertile, his style lyrical and Pindaric; and, just as Pindar darted from one subject to another, Jomelli changed his tones and themes in a way wholly new and learnedly irregular.

"But though his learning and elaboration, which appeared in his works, procured him the

esteem of consummate musicians, they sometimes lost him that of the multitude. He found the theatre at Naples, and indeed almost all the theatres of Italy, in the greatest corruption; where, in and out of the orchestra, all is noise and confusion. No one thing harmonises with another: the company, regardless of what is acting, and wholly ignorant of the subject, after much noise and chattering, are hardly quiet when an air of particular interest is performed by a singer of the first class. A learned and ingenious kind of music, like that of Jomelli, full of harmony and contrivance, which requires careful execution and the utmost stillness and attention on the part of the audience, could not satisfy the frivolous and depraved taste of the Italians, who used to say that the music of Gluck, Jomelli, Hasse, and Bach, was too rough and German, and pleased them less than the songs of the gondolieri, and airs with few accompaniments and many graces and divisions.

"It was without sufficiently reflecting upon the present depraved taste of his countrymen that Jomelli set *Ifigenia*, his last opera, in such a scientific and elaborate style that the audience was dissatisfied with it. But, to say the truth, most of the singers, who had but little time to rehearse, (Jomelli having only finished the opera on the day of its representation,) executed this learned composition in a very imperfect manner; and in a few

evenings it was withdrawn. This work, however, by a caprice not uncommon in theatrical matters, is now admired and thought far superior to the two which preceded it; and every judge and lover of good music has it on his harpsichord desk, and would continue for ever to hear it with delight."

CHAPTER V.

Piccini—Sacchini—Anfossi—Traetta—Guglielmi—Sarti—Minor composers.

Piccini, a contemporary of Jomelli, though his life was prolonged to a later period, effected great innovations in the style and structure of the Italian opera.

Nicolo Piccini was born in 1728 at Bari, a town in the kingdom of Naples. He was designed for the church; but his propensity for music was such that his father was obliged to give way to it, and he was placed in the conservatory of St. Onophrio, then under the direction of Leo. His ardent genius rendered him impatient of the slow and formal mode of tuition to which he was subjected by the subordinate teacher to whose care he was committed. Without rules, or any other guide than the music he had an opportunity of hearing, he indulged his inclination for composition by writing psalms, and oratorio and opera airs, and, at last, a whole mass. This irregular conduct was

reported to Leo, who sent for the culprit, and ordered him, in a severe tone, to produce his score. Piccini, in great alarm, went to fetch it, and put it into the master's hands. Leo turned over the leaves, and ordered that it should be immediately tried. The performers were summoned, and the parts distributed; and when all was ready, Leo gravely put his conductor's baton into the young composer's hand, and desired him to beat the time. Piccini, in great confusion, saw nothing for it but to obey, and, giving the signal with a trembling hand, the piece commenced. As it went on, the youthful *maestro* forgot his fears, and conducted the performance with decision and fire, and the auditory were charmed with the spirit and effect of the music. Everybody loaded the composer with praises, except Leo, who, after remaining for some time silent, reproved Piccini for thus abusing the delightful gift he had received from nature. "Instead of studying the principles of the art," he said, "you give yourself up to all the flights of your imagination; and when, without plan or rule, you have succeeded in making what you call a score, you think you have accomplished a masterpiece." Piccini's spirit was roused by this reproach, and he declared that he had been impelled to the efforts so severely blamed by the useless and unmeaning lessons to which he was subject, and which had disgusted him with study. Leo, feeling that the youth was in the right, spoke to him

kindly, and desired him to attend every morning, in order to receive instructions from himself.

On Leo's death he was succeeded by Durante, who soon distinguished Piccini's pre-eminent merit. He conceived a particular affection for him, and delighted in explaining to him the secrets of harmony. "The others," he used to say, "are my scholars, but this young man is my friend."

After *twelve* years of study under these great masters, Piccini left the conservatory. The first fruits of a genius so highly cultivated were two or three comic operas, composed for one of the minor theatres of Naples, and very favourably received by the public. One of these, *Il curioso del proprio danno*, had a run for four successive seasons—a most extraordinary circumstance in Italy, where there is such incessant craving for novelty.

In 1756 his first serious opera, *Zenobia*, was performed at the theatre of San Carlo with the most brilliant success. His next opera, *L'Alessandro nelle Indie*, produced at Rome, established his reputation.

In 1760 he produced the famous comic opera, *La Cecchina*, or *La Buona Figliuola*, one of the most successful pieces that has ever appeared. The enthusiasm which it excited in Rome, where it was first performed, amounted to extravagance. It was immediately performed all over Italy, even in the smallest country theatres, and everywhere received with the same admiration. All classes,

from the highest to the lowest, crowded to see it. New fashions in dress were named from it; and shops and taverns took *La Cecchina* for their sign. A family of rank having built a villa in the neighbourhood of Rome, called it *La Cecchina*. The airs were sung by ladies and gentlemen in their domestic circles, by artisans at their labour, by country people in the fields, by itinerant musicians in the streets and highways. All Italy, in short, resounded with the music or the praises of *La Cecchina*.

The drama of *La Buona Figliuola* is by Goldoni,* and founded on Richardson's novel of Pamela. The music approaches more nearly to the modern form than that of any other piece equally old. The two *finales*, which terminated each act, were the great features of novelty. The merit of the invention of these concerted pieces belongs to Logroscino;† but, in this opera, Piccini gave his *finales* a developement and extent which pieces of this description had never previously received. The airs are remarkable for their easy flow and unaffected simplicity.

While *La Buona Figliuola* was in the height of its popularity at Rome, Jomelli passed through that city on his return from Stutgard to Naples. On his arrival, everybody was talking of the new opera and its author, of whom he had never heard.

* See *antè*, vol. i., p. 357.

† See *anté*, vol. i., p. 404.

Imagining it to be the childish production of some precocious boy, he went to the theatre with great indifference. He listened to the opera with attention, without making a single remark. When it was over, he was surrounded by a crowd of amateurs, all anxious to hear what he thought of their favourite work. "Hear the opinion of Jomelli," he said; "this is invention:" as emphatic a panegyric as this great man could have possibly pronounced.

Piccini's next opera was the *Olimpiade* of Metastasio; a piece which had been set by the greatest of his precursors—Pergolesi, Galuppi, and Jomelli. He rivalled these great men, and, in some parts, even surpassed them. It is admitted that his version of the air "Se cerca, se dice," excels every other in beauty and expression.

In this opera Piccini set the example to the Italian composers of departing from the uniformity which had previously been observed in the structure of airs and duets. In the airs, it was the unvarying practice, after the second part, which was short and crowded with modulations, to begin *da capo*, and conclude with the first part. Duets, also, were cast in one mould. They began with a slow movement, the voices being first separate and then united: next came, as in the airs, a short second part, and then the first part was repeated. Piccini, both in his airs and duets, adopted the form of a slow movement followed by a quick one,

which became more and more rapid and energetic towards the close, and concluded without any return to the first movement. The effect of this innovation was strikingly apparent in the duet, "Ne' giorni tuoi felici," when it was compared with the duets composed to the same words by the masters who had previously set the opera. It was found to be so animated and dramatic, that the same form was adopted by Sacchini, Anfossi, Sarti, and all the other composers who afterwards set the same opera: and indeed this manner of accelerating the movement of a piece is found to express so happily the increasing intensity of passion or feeling, that airs in this form are more frequently met with than in any other, even in modern compositions.

Piccini remained at Rome for fifteen years; and for all that time preserved the favour of the public of that city, remarkable as they have always been for feebleness and caprice. He met at last, however, a rival in their favour in Anfossi, who, having brought out an opera, in 1773, with great success, took possession of the affections of a people who can never have more than one idol at a time. The admirers of Anfossi actually hissed a new opera of Piccini's from the stage, and got a piece of Anfossi's substituted for it. Piccini, deeply affected by this injustice, immediately left Rome for Naples, where he was seized with a long and serious illness. On his recovery he declared that he

would never again compose for Rome; and he kept his word.

At Naples Piccini's works were as successful as ever, and he enjoyed the highest consideration among his countrymen. The first families considered it an honour to have him as a guest; and no stranger visited Naples without desiring to enjoy the pleasure of his society.

While in this situation, he received an invitation to visit France, for the purpose of writing for the French opera. He accepted the proposal; and, in December 1766, arrived with his family in Paris. Some account of his residence in that capital, and the memorable contest between his partisans and those of Gluck will be given in the sequel, as belonging to the history of the musical drama in France. He remained in that country till the year 1791, when, having been deprived of his employments and pensions in consequence of the revolution, he returned to his native country.

He was received at Naples with great distinction, and the king granted him a pension. He had produced several successful works, when he ruined his prospects by his folly in publicly professing the political principles he had imbibed at Paris. He consequently became obnoxious to the government, was placed under the surveillance of the police, and remained for four years absolutely imprisoned in his house. Being thus prevented from the exercise of his talents, and having lost all the pro-

perty which he had possessed in France, he was reduced to a state of indigence. In this unhappy situation he remained till 1798, when, having obtained permission to leave Naples, he returned to France.

On his arrival his friends exerted themselves in his behalf, and obtained for him a small pension from the government; but their efforts to procure the restoration of his former pension from the opera were thwarted by the intrigues of persons who looked upon themselves as his rivals. He was soon afterwards rejoined by a part of his family. This, though a consolation to him, added, in his narrow circumstances, to his embarrassments; and his anxiety on account of the difficulties of his situation, and the unprotected state of his children who had been left at Naples, brought on an attack of palsy. On his recovery he took the resolution of making a personal application to the First Consul, who received him graciously, and directed that he should be appointed one of the inspectors of the conservatory, as a mark of national gratitude for the services be had rendered to the music of France. But this favour came too late. He was exhausted by mental and bodily suffering, and expired at the village of Passy on the 7th of May, 1800, at the age of seventy-two.

He left a widow and six children, who were not neglected by the French government. They were allowed a residence at the public expense; and the

place which had been conferred upon him was given to the composer Monsigny, under the condition of half the salary of 5,000 francs being paid to Madame Piccini. His son, Ludovico Piccini, became a composer of considerable eminence, and brought out a number of dramatic pieces, both in Italy and France.

"Piccini," says M. Ginguéné, his biographer, "was under the middle size, but well made, with considerable dignity of carriage. His countenance was very agreeable. His mind was acute, enlarged, and cultivated. Latin and Italian literature were familiar to him when he went to France; and afterwards he became almost as well acquainted with French literature. He spoke and wrote Italian with great purity; but among his countrymen he preferred the Neapolitan dialect, which he considered the most expressive, the most difficult, and most figurative of all languages. He used it principally in narration, with a gaiety, a truth, and a pantomimic expression, after the manner of his country, which delighted the Neapolitans, and made his stories intelligible even to those who had a slight knowledge of the Italian language."

As a musician, Piccini is distinguished for the purity and simplicity of his style. He always wished to preserve the supremacy of the voice, and, though he well knew how to make his instrumental parts both rich and effective, he was a determined enemy to the indiscriminate and unmeaning use of florid and complex accompaniments which

were coming into fashion even in his day. His opinions on this subject have been recorded by his biographer, and have not lost, through the lapse of time, any of their claims to attention.

"We very soon learn," he said, "all that can enter into harmony. It is not what may be admitted that it is difficult to learn, but what ought to be left out. The four-stringed instruments which form the basis of an orchestra, accommodate themselves equally to all sorts of expression. This is not the case with wind instruments and instruments of percussion. The oboe has an expression which does not belong to the clarinet: and it, in its turn, differs totally from that of the flute. The horns change their character according to the key in which they are employed. The bassoon, when not confounded with the bass, becomes sad and melancholy. The trombones have a mournful expression, whilst that of the trumpet is warlike and brilliant. The deafening cymbal is entirely military, and the moment I hear it I expect to see cavalry defile. Were the employment which nature herself assigns to these instruments preserved to them, a variety of effects, and a series of infinitely diversified pictures, would be produced. But they are all thrown in at once, and used incessantly; and they thus overpower and indurate the ear, without presenting any picture to the mind, to which the ear is the passage. I should be glad to know how they will rouse it when it is accustomed to this up-

roar, which will soon happen, and of what new witchcraft they will avail themselves. Perhaps they will return to nature, and the true means which are acknowledged by the art. It is well known what happens to palates blunted by the use of spirituous liquors. In a few months, moreover, everything may be learned which is necessary to produce these exaggerated effects; but it requires much time and study to be able to excite genuine emotion. How can any one hesitate in the choice?"

Equally sound and useful are his remarks on excess in modulation:

"To modulate is to take a route which the ear will follow willingly. It even asks to be led;—but only on condition that when arrived at the point to which you have conducted it, it may there find something which repays it for its journey, and where it may enjoy some repose. If you keep it constantly going on without granting what it demands, it becomes weary, and will follow you no longer."—"To modulate," he says again, "is not difficult in itself: there is a routine for that as well as all other trades. The proof of this is found in those enharmonic modulations which appear to the ignorant as the height of science, and are, after all, the mere sport of scholars. To create melody from a given modulation, to quit it only by the legitimate means, to return to it without harshness or insipidity, to make the change of modulation a just means of expression and of judicious variety;

—these are the real difficulties. But to quit a key almost as soon as we have entered it, to become extravagant without reason or end, to proceed by jumps and skips, merely because we do not know how to remain where we are;—to modulate, in short, for the sake of modulating, is to prove that the artist is ignorant of the end of his art as well as of its principles, and that he affects a superabundance of imagination and learning, in order to conceal the want of both the one and the other."

The two great composers, of whom some account has now been given, contributed greatly, though in different ways, to the improvement of the Italian opera. The stage had come to be in a great measure supplied by the productions of shallow and superficial musicians, such as Pescetti, Lampugnani, and others, whose airs were little more than strings of common-places, calculated to show off the execution of favourite singers, and destitute of learning, invention, and dramatic effect. Jomelli brought to the service of the opera the resources of depth of harmony, variety of modulation, and richness of orchestral accompaniments: and, though in his own time, his countrymen were so insensible of the merit of his music as to exclaim that it was "*scelerata,*" yet it gradually produced its effect upon their taste. Piccini adopted a style of melody of the most simple and expressive kind, keeping his accompaniments in complete subserviency to the

voice, but rendering them beautiful and interesting by his attention to the character of the different instruments, and the variety of effects produced by his use of them. But his great innovations consisted in his departure from the old conventional forms of the opera; in the banishment of the eternal *da capo* from his airs and duets, and in the use of concerted pieces and *finales*. These novelties were adopted by all his contemporaries and successors; and the opera thus acquired a rapidity of action, an animation, and dramatic effect, which it had never before possessed.

The first Italian composer who followed in the track of Piccini was a man of genius equal to his own—Antonio Sacchini. This great master was born at Naples in 1735, and, in his early years, studied in the conservatory of St. Onofrio, under Durante. At this time he paid much attention to the violin; and his skill as a performer on that instrument enabled him to give his accompaniments peculiar elegance and effect, and suggested the many brilliant *obbligato* passages for the violin which we meet with in his operas.

In 1762 he had gained such celebrity that he obtained an engagement as composer to the principal theatre at Rome, in which situation he continued for seven or eight years. In 1769, he was appointed successor to Galuppi, as director of the conservatory of L'Ospedaletto at Venice, a semi-

nary for the musical tuition of girls. The celebrated Signora Gabrielli was educated in this school while it was under Sacchini's direction.

He arrived in England in 1772, and supported here the high reputation he had gained on the continent. "His operas," says Burney, "of the *Cid* and *Tamerlano* were equal, if not superior, to any musical dramas I had heard in any part of Europe. The airs of Millico, the first man, were wholly written in the delicate and pathetic style of that singer; as the first woman's part was in the spirited and nervous style of Girelli. And he cherished the talents of the inferior singers in so judicious a manner, that all their defects were constantly disguised or concealed.* Savoi, notwithstanding his fine voice, had been worse than unnoticed before this period, for he was almost insulted; yet so excellent was the music he had to execute in Sacchini's operas, and so favourably did it call him into notice, that instead of going off the stage in silence, he was applauded and even encored nearly as much and as frequently as the first singers. Carrara, too, a young singer, whose voice was naturally drowsy, childish, and insipid, from the beauty of her songs,

* This is a matter of the utmost importance in dramatic composition. Many a work of merit has failed from the composer's want of attention to the qualities of the performers, or his want of skill in concealing their defects and turning their powers to the best advantage. Burney's illustrations of this, given above, are very instructive.

was well received. Indeed, each of these dramas was so *entire*, so masterly, yet so new and natural, that there was nothing left for criticism to censure, though innumerable beauties to point out and admire. It was evident that this composer had a taste so exquisite, and so totally free from pedantry, that he was frequently new without effort; never thinking of himself or his fame for any particular excellence, but totally occupied with the ideas of the poet, and the propriety, consistency, and effects of the whole drama. His accompaniments, though always rich and ingenious, never call off attention from the voice, but, by a constant transparency, the principal melody is rendered distinguishable through all the contrivance of imitative and picturesque design in the instruments."

During his residence in England, Sacchini produced many operas; but his improvidence and want of economy involved him in difficulties, and he suffered from the cabals of persons who chose to consider themselves as his rivals. Rauzzini, the celebrated singer, who had composed several operas, declared himself to be the author of the principal songs in all the operas which had lately appeared under Sacchini's name, and even threatened to make affidavit to this effect before a magistrate, which, however, he does not seem ever to have done. The story bears absurdity on the face of it; and Burney understands the truth to have been, that during the severe fits of the gout to

which Sacchini was subject, when he was called upon for his operas before they were ready, he might have employed Rauzzini (according to a practice by no means uncommon) to fill up the parts, compose some of the recitatives, and perhaps a few unimportant airs for the inferior singers. The calumny, however, was propagated with industrious malice, and gained ground, though it was disbelieved and despised by Sacchini's friends and the reasonable part of the public. But it so deeply affected both his comfort and his interest, and added so much to his embarrassments, that he found it necessary, in 1781, to leave London for Paris. In the following year he returned to London, where he only increased his debts and difficulties. He therefore, in 1784, finally left England, and settled in Paris, where he died in September, 1786.

Sacchini, as Piccini had done, directed his talents to the French stage, for which he composed several of his greatest works. These pieces, and the circumstances attending their production, will be afterwards noticed. Sacchini died in the height of public favour in France, and was honoured with a public funeral, attended with every mark of respect for his memory.

In his own country, Sacchini is long since forgotten, and the same thing is the case in England; for, among those who listen to his melodies introduced into an English opera of forty or fifty years

ago, few know even the name of the author.* But his French operas keep their place in the repertory of the grand opera; and the greatest of them, *Œdippe en Colonne*, in a German dress, is still performed at Berlin, and other places of Germany, where the memory of the masterpieces of the old school is not wholly lost among the novelties of the day. We find in a German journal the following notice of its performance at Cassel. "Sacchini's grand opera *Œdipus zu Colonos*, was produced on the occasion of the birthday of our eldest princess. The reception which this masterpiece of the good old time met with here is a satisfactory proof, that taste and feeling for music of the clear, simple, and expressive kind, is not lost. The accompaniment, also, in which not only the clarinet, the trumpet, and the trombone are unemployed, but even the bassoon is but sparingly used, but which, with all its economy of means, displays so much power, convinced us that great masses of harmony are not always necessary to produce great effects. This opera continues to be performed, and has excited a general wish to have recourse to the vigorous productions of a period in which native genius abounded and spurned the trammels of imitation."—The German journals, it may be added, contain innumerable instances of the regard still paid to the great works of a former age by a peo-

* The air "Henry cull'd the flow'ret's bloom," in *Rosina*, is a beautiful specimen of Sacchini's style.

ple whose musical predilections, being founded on judgment and taste, resist the influence of fashion.

ANFOSSI, who has been mentioned as the successful rival of Piccini at Rome, was a composer of merit. He was born about the year 1736, and educated in one of the conservatories of Naples. In his youth he received much friendship from Piccini, who not only gave him instructions in his art, but procured him an engagement at one of the theatres of Rome. Anfossi was at first unfortunate; but, encouraged by Piccini to exertion and perseverance, he was at length so successful as to supplant his friend and instructor in the unstable favour of the Roman public. He experienced, however, their fickleness in his turn. His opera of *Olimpiade*, performed in 1776, completely failed; and this unexpected mortification drove him from Rome. He afterwards went to Paris, where he produced an opera on the French stage with moderate success. In 1782 he came to London, where he remained three years; but he arrived at an unfavourable time; for, Sacchini having preceded him, and the affairs of the opera-house being in a state of the utmost embarrassment, he had no opportunity of doing anything worthy of his reputation. In 1787 he returned to Rome, where he was received with the favour he had formerly enjoyed, and produced several successful works. He died in that city in 1795. Anfossi did not possess the inventive genius

of Piccini and Sacchini; but his style was clear and elegant, and many of his concerted pieces were considered as models in that species of composition.

Among the other Italian composers of this period, Traetta and Guglielmi were the most eminent. They were both of the Neapolitan school, and both acquired a very high reputation on the continent, though neither of them had much success in England. They, as well as several others of lesser note, followed in the footsteps of Piccini.

An anecdote of Guglielmi, related by Ferrari,* is characteristic of the man, as well as of the Neapolitan public. "He was engaged to write an opera buffa for the Christmas season at Naples. The piece produced was *Adalinda*. Guglielmi was a good musician and well versed in dramatic composition, but indolent, avaricious, and conceited. He would write two or three entire pieces in every new opera, and leave the recitatives and concerted pieces to be supplied by his scholars, and even by the copyists of Naples. At the first representation the opera was hissed as it deserved: indeed, about the middle of the second act, the dissatisfaction became so general that it was found necessary to drop the curtain, and the performers stole away as they could. On quitting the theatre, Guglielmi invited some of his friends to supper, to devise means

* *Aneddoti piacevoli ed interessanti*; a gossiping little book, containing, however, a good deal of curious musical information.

for bringing matters round the following evening. In the morning he repaired to the *Café del Veneziano*, the great rendezvous of the principal performers of the theatres. He there found the manager. He went up to him, and taking a roll of music from his pocket, said, "There is a piece which will set all to rights again; *Adalinda* will go well enough to-night. Hand me seventy ducats, and that will do." The manager looked at the title of the manuscript, and found it to be "*Vaga mano sospirata*; a posthumous terzetto of *Adalinda*." Knowing the character of the *maestro*, he put the music in his pocket, ordered the master of the coffee-house to pay Guglielmi the money, set the copyist to work, ordered a rehearsal, and produced the piece the same evening. The affair was immediately known all over Naples; and when evening arrived, the doors of the theatre were besieged by a crowd long before the time of opening. At length the performance began. The public, in their eager expectation of the new piece, suffered all the rest to pass unnoticed. At last the terzetto was sung; the applause was deafening, and the singers were obliged to repeat it three times over.* After this, the first finale and the pieces of the second act, which had been hissed the preceding evening, were extolled to the skies, and in particular a duet, the

* It was by the same device that Rossini changed the fate of *Mosè in Egitto*, after it had failed the first night.

music of which was as wretched as the words were silly."

Another composer of that period was SARTI, than whom few musicians have, in their own time, enjoyed greater popularity. He was born in 1730; and, even in his youth, rose so high in the estimation of his enthusiastic countrymen, that he was known among them by the title of "Il divino maestro." After producing many operas which filled all Europe with their fame, he went to Russia, where he spent the latter part of his life in the highest favour with the imperial court. He died in 1802.

His most favourite opera was *Giulio Sabino*, which was performed in London in 1788, but did not please so much as it had done in Italy. The following observations on this celebrated piece have been made by an able critic.* "The opera of *Giulio Sabino*, which has been published in the full score, may be taken as a fair sample of the claims of Sarti to eminence as a theatrical composer; and certainly its enthusiastic reception will not raise our admiration of the state of musical taste in Europe forty years since. It may perhaps be best described by negatives. It has no concerted pieces, unless one trio may be so designated. Except a *marcia funebre*, it contains not one movement in a minor key. There are neither clarinets nor flutes in the

* *Harmonicon* for 1830.

score, nor a single prominent feature in any part for the wind instruments that are used ; nor is there in the whole opera a piece, in the course of which the modulations wander beyond the dominant or subdominant of the original key. In the recitatives a diminished seventh is occasionally to be found ; but throughout all the songs, one duet and a trio, of which the opera consists, it occurs only once. The popularity of *Giulio Sabino* must have been founded on the beauty and simplicity of its melodies, and the singing of Pacchierotti, for whom the part of Sabino was written, supported by a *prima donna*, Signora Pozzi, and a first tenor, Panati, both of whom, from the songs written for them, must have possessed extensive voices and great powers of execution. On the whole, it may safely be pronounced far inferior to the best contemporary works of Sacchini, Paesiello, and many other writers ; and to be surpassed in every point by our own *Artaxerxes*, written many years before."

Considerable but short-lived celebrity was gained by Bach,* Venti, Cocchi, Giardini,† and other opera composers of this period ; but there is nothing in their works which calls for particular notice.

* John Christian Bach, one of the numerous family of the illustrious Sebastian Bach, was chiefly distinguished as a composer for and performer on the piano-forte, which was then beginning to supersede the harpsichord.

† The great violinist.

CHAPTER VI.

Paesiello—Cimarosa—Zingarelli.

The musical history of the last century includes several Italian composers, who, though to some extent contemporary with the generation above described, may yet be considered as belonging to a different class. Their career having extended to a later period, the opera, in their hands, assumed a still more modern form, and some of their works still hold a distinguished place on the stage. Among these composers, the chief are Paesiello, Cimarosa, and Zingarelli.

Giovanni Paesiello was born at Tarento in 1741. Like many other great musicians, he was educated in the conservatory of San Onofrio at Naples, when that institution was under the direction of Durante. He was first brought into notice by a comic *intermezzo*, which was performed in the conservatory, and procured for him an engagement to compose an opera for the theatre of Bologna in 1763. From that time he produced a great number of pieces for the different Italian

theatres, till 1776, when he went to Russia upon an invitation from the empress Catherine II. to enter into her service. He remained in Russia nine years, during which time he composed several of his best works, especially the celebrated *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and the comic *intermezzo*, *Il mondo nella Luna*. At the end of this period he returned to Naples, where he was taken into the service of king Ferdinand IV., as *maestro di capella*, with a salary of twelve hundred ducats a year.

The opera of *Il Pirro*, composed soon after his return to Naples, was remarkable for being the first *serious* opera which contained concerted introductions and finales. These, which had been long previously introduced by Logroscino into the comic opera, had been hitherto confined to it; and their introduction into the serious opera was an important step in the progress of the musical drama.

He was afterwards invited to return to Russia, but declined the proposal in consequence of being in the service of the king of Naples; and the same reason prevented him from accepting an invitation to Berlin and another to London. He transmitted, however, to our king's theatre the opera of *La Locanda*, of the performance of which here we do not find any notice; but it was afterwards performed at Naples, under the title of *Il Fanatico in Berlina*.

Dr. Burney, who saw Paesiello at Naples in 1770, says, "He was the only composer at Naples who could make head against the high favour in which

Piccini stood after his *Buona Figliuola*. We were so happy as to hear him *improvvisare* in music at Sir William Hamilton's, where having dined, he was begged to sing a scene of an opera ; but there being none at hand which he liked to perform, he said, 'Date mi un libretto,' and the words of the first opera which could be found having been put upon the harpsichord desk, he composed and sang extempore three or four scenes in so exquisite a manner to his own ingenious accompaniment, that no studied music or singing we ever heard, of the greatest composers or performers, ever pleased us so much. It was not written music—it was inspiration."

In 1787 two of his comic operas were performed in London. The one was *Gli Schiavi per Amore*, in which Signora Storace, who afterwards became so celebrated on the English stage, made her first appearance with great success. The other was *Il Rè Teodoro*. The English public was delighted with the originality, gaiety, and elegance of these pieces, and especially with the richness and beauty of the finales, notwithstanding the suppression of some of Paesiello's airs to make room for others by Corri, Mazzinghi, and Storace : an unwarrantable step, whatever the merit of the substituted airs may have been ; for they could hardly have been superior, it may well be supposed, to the charming melodies which had already been listened to with delight all over Italy and Germany, and their introduction must have destroyed that unity and sim-

plicity of style which constitutes so much of the beauty of the original work.

In 1799, when the Neapolitan revolution converted the government into a short-lived republic, Paesiello was appointed the national director of music. On the restoration of the Bourbon family, his acceptance of this appointment was naturally deemed a heinous offence, and he was for some time deprived of all his employments. He was soon, however, restored to favour; a circumstance creditable to a family who might have been justified in treating him more severely, as they were entitled to expect some mark of attachment and gratitude, during their adversity, from one who had been long in their employment, and on whom they had bestowed many favours.

Soon afterwards he received an invitation from Bonaparte, then chief consul of France, which he accepted with the permission of the king of Naples. On reaching Paris, he was provided with a handsome suite of apartments, a court equipage with suitable attendants, with a salary of 12,000 francs (£500 sterling,) and a gratuity of 18,000 for incidental disbursements, besides a liberal allowance for travelling expenses. He was offered several high appointments, such as director of the Imperial Academy of the Institution of Music, and others; but he declined them all, and accepted only that of master of the chapel, for which he composed a great quantity of sacred music. For the *Académie*

Royal de Musique he composed the French opera of *Proserpine*.

Ferrari, in his *Aneddoti Piacevoli*, says, "Paesiello was at this time the idol of Bonaparte, and the feeling was reciprocal. Scarcely a day passed but the composer dined with the First Consul, an honour which was at once flattering and inconvenient to Paesiello, for it proved a serious interruption to his studies." Ferrari describes *Proserpine* as "the most beautiful though not the most successful of Paesiello's operas."

After a residence of two years and a half in Paris, finding that the climate was injurious to the health of his wife, he returned to Naples.

When Joseph Bonaparte took possession of the throne of Naples, he confirmed Paesiello in his appointments; and when Joseph, on his going to Spain, was succeeded by Murat, or Joachim Napoleon, that sovereign also confirmed him in his places. In his latter years he obtained many honours. He received from king Joseph the decoration of the order of the Two Sicilies, and was nominated a member of the *Accademia Napoleone* at Lucca, the Italian Academy at Leghorn, the Sons of Apollo at Paris, and the Institute of France.

On the fall of the Bonaparte family, Paesiello's fortunes underwent an unfavourable change. His situation at Naples in 1814 is described by Ferrari. "What delight," says that writer, "did I ex-

perience in again seeing Naples after an absence of eight-and-twenty years, and in finding my good old master, Paesiello, still enjoying excellent health, though his situation in life was much less fortunate than when I had last seen him! On our very first meeting he gave me an account of all that had unhappily befallen him. He said that his attachment to Bonaparte and his dynasty had been the cause of his being deprived of the pension he had formerly received from Ferdinand IV.; that, from other political circumstances, he had also lost the pension from the grand duchess of Russia, as well as that from Napoleon; and that he was reduced to subsist upon the meagre appointment which he held in the chapel-royal. It was painful to see a man of genius like Paesiello, who for more than half a century had been used to live in affluence, abandoned in his old age by the court, the nobility, and even by those who had called themselves his friends." Some attempts were made to obtain his restoration to the favour of the court, but without effect; and in this neglected state he was left to spend the short remnant of his life.

He died on the 5th of June, 1816, aged seventy-five. He was honoured with a public funeral, at which a *Requiem*, found among his papers, was performed. The same evening his opera of *Nina* was represented at the theatre, when the king of Naples and the whole court attended, to show

their respect for the memory of this illustrious musician.

"He asked for bread, and they gave him a stone."

"Paesiello," says the Chevalier Le Sueur, "was not only a great musician, but possessed a large fund of general information. He was well versed in the dead languages, acquainted with all branches of literature, and on terms of friendship with the most distinguished persons of the age. His mind was noble, and above all mean passions; he neither knew envy nor the feeling of rivalry."—"He composed," says the same writer, "seventy-eight operas, of which twenty-seven were serious and fifty-one comic,—eight *intermezzi*, and an immense number of cantatas, oratorios, masses, &c.; seven symphonies for the Emperor Joseph II., several piano-forte pieces for the queen of Spain, and many theatrical scenes for the court of Russia."

Ferrari, who in his youth was one of Paesiello's pupils, and kept up an intercourse with him during his life, gives a lively and pleasing description of his habits and manners, and (what is still more valuable) records several of his opinions on subjects connected with his art. According to his account, Paesiello must have been a kind-hearted and very good-humoured man, with a large fund of Neapolitan humour. In his latter days he had a desire to disguise from others (and perhaps from himself)

the real extent of his age. "I quitted Naples," says Ferrari, "at the close of January 1816. Two days before setting out I went to receive Paesiello's commands, and the day following he came with a letter, which he read to me, in reply to one I had brought him from Count Woronzow. It contained an account of his sufferings, and terminated with the following postscript:—'Your excellency informs me that you are past sixty, and that you cannot tell whether we shall ever meet again. What if *I* say that I am full sixty-four!' Paesiello died three months afterwards. I was at Lord Bristol's, when his lordship came to me with a newspaper in his hand, exclaiming, 'Ferrari, Paesiello is dead!' —'Good heavens! and I left him but three months ago in perfect health, though at the age of sixty-four.'—'Sixty-four! you are wrong—read this paragraph, and you will see that he was more than eighty-four.'" This was an error; but he was more than seventy-four.

The opinions of great artists on the subject of their art are always instructive and worthy of being preserved. Those of Paesiello are consistent with his character as a composer. Ferrari, who had introduced himself to him for the purpose of becoming his pupil, was naturally expressing great admiration of his genius, when he was cut short by the composer saying, in his quaint phrase, that he was a mere ass in music. Ferrari was all astonishment that he should so speak, after so many noble

operas, so many creations of genius that had delighted the world.

"My dear friend," said Paesiello, "you cannot suppose me altogether destitute of self-love. If you speak to me of giving words their proper expression, of making a shepherd, a clown, a warrior, a heroine, sing in their proper character; if you speak to me of theatrical effects, and all that, I tell you boldly that I fear no one: but in point of true music I call myself a mere cipher, because that is an art so profound, a science so inexhaustible, that I look upon myself as the merest novice. And as to creations and novelties, what is there new under the sun?"—"Don't rack your brains about novelty," continued the veteran composer, "or diving into the secrets of science: be content simply to search for truth. Study your counterpoint with unremitting attention; examine the compositions of good authors, both ancient and modern; be never weary of reading Metastasio and other dramatic poets; and, after having blotted some reams of music paper, you will write correctly and with truth."

In regard to the difference between the Italian and German schools, Paesiello said—

"In Italy, all we make account of is melody, and we employ modulation only to heighten the expression of words. In Germany, whatever be the cause, whether it arises from a difference of constitution, or from a consciousness of inferiority

to us in respect to song, they make little account of melody, and employ it but rarely. Hence they are obliged to have recourse to elaborate harmonies to supply the defect, and compensate for the absence of the magic beauties of the voice."

This *dictum*, however, he qualified by exceptions. "For example," he said, "there is no Italian composer who can surpass the pure melody of Hasse, the ingenious and nervous choruses of Handel, or the tragic effects of Gluck. But no German composer has surpassed the science of Padre Martini, the counterpoint of Durante, or the grand and masculine harmony of Padre Vallotti." He does not speak of Mozart, whose works at that time were scarcely known in Italy.

Paesiello's style is characterised by great simplicity and apparent facility : and yet there is probably no composer to whose music Carissimi's exclamation, "Ah, questo facile quanto è difficile," may be so emphatically applied. The profound harmonies and learned contrivances of the German masters may be imitated by dint of application and study; and a perusal of Italian scores may enable the composer to accumulate all the divisions, difficulties, and intricacies of vocal execution. But Paesiello's few and simple notes, so full of grace and beauty, so deep and various in their expression, are beyond the reach of imitation. Sounds at all resembling his must flow, without labour and without effect, from a fountain of melody as

pure and abundant as his own. His very simplicity is the greatest mark of his abundance: it was never necessary for him to have recourse to artifice and complication for the purpose of concealing poverty of invention. His accompaniments are similar in character to his vocal parts; wholly without elaboration or display of learning, but clear, picturesque, and effective. His scores are now called thin; but it may well be questioned whether the change of taste, which has led this to be considered a fault, is favourable to dramatic music. His accompaniments not only sustain and relieve the voice, but are full of instrumental effects, which, in his time, were new and original, and will never cease to charm those who prefer delicacy and refinement to loud and overpowering masses of sound. Paesiello was the author of several important improvements in orchestral composition. He introduced the viola, the clarinet, and the bassoon, into the theatres of Naples.

Though a voluminous writer both in the serious and comic styles, Paesiello's genius seems to have inclined chiefly to the latter. His tragic operas are now laid aside; but his *Pazza per Amore* will always be performed when there is an actress capable, like Pasta, of representing the beautiful and pathetic character of *Nina*. *La Frascatana* was one of the most charming performances of Catalani; and that piece, with *La Molinara*, and several of Paesiello's other comic operas, keep their

places in the theatres of Germany, where excellence is not sacrificed to novelty.

Notwithstanding the greatness of Piccini, Sacchini, and Paesiello, a still higher place must be assigned to CIMAROSA. This great composer was born at Naples in 1754. Though not an immediate disciple of Durante, he belonged to his school, having been educated at the Conservatory of Loretto under Fenaroli, one of the pupils of that great master. His life, down to his latter years, was a career of uninterrupted success and prosperity. He became celebrated as a dramatic composer at an early age, and in 1787 received an invitation from the Empress Catherine of Russia to accept the office of dramatic composer to her court. In 1791 he went to Vienna, having been appointed by the Emperor Leopold director of the Italian opera of that city. It was here that he composed his chef d'œuvre, *Il Matrimonio Segreto*, which was received with unparalleled enthusiasm. The emperor attended the first representation, and was so transported with delight, that, at the end of the piece, he invited the whole of the performers to a banquet, and sent them back the same evening to the theatre, where they performed it a second time. Its reception in Italy was not less enthusiastic. After the death of the Emperor Leopold, Cimarosa returned to Naples, where he was appointed *maestro di capella*, and produced some of his finest works, particularly *Il Matrimonio per Sussuro*, *La Pene-*

lope, *L'Olimpiade*, *Il Sacrifizio d'Abramo*, *Gli Amanti Comici*, and lastly, *Gli Orazi*.

Hitherto his career had been prosperous, brilliant, and unmarked by any memorable occurrence. But his latter years were most unhappy. When the French for a time expelled the Bourbon family and took possession of Naples, he so conducted himself as to show that he was tinctured with the revolutionary spirit of the time. To what extent he carried the display of his political opinions does not appear: but his conduct must at all events have been very indiscreet; for its consequence was, that, on the return of the exiled family, he was imprisoned, and narrowly escaped the forfeiture of his life. He languished a long time in a dungeon, and was so closely immured that it was currently reported that he had been executed. At length he was released, and immediately went to Venice, in consequence, it may be presumed, of an order to quit the Neapolitan territory. He arrived at Venice in 1800, and died on the 11th of January, 1801, "in consequence," says Stendhal in his *Life of Rossini*, "of the barbarous treatment he had met with in the prison into which he had been thrown by Queen Caroline." This, however, it may be hoped, is not true: as, after his arrival at Venice, he not only completed and brought out his opera of *L'Imprudente Fortunato*, but had partly composed another opera, called *Artemisia*, when his progress was arrested by death. It was completed

by another composer, and brought on the stage; but the audience would not allow the performance to finish, and the curtain fell in the middle of the second act.

Cimarosa's genius embraced both the tragic and comic styles of composition. *Gli Orazi* and *Il Matrimonio Segreto* are the finest specimens of both, which the Italian school has produced. The drama of *Gli Orazi* is taken from Corneille's tragedy *Les Horaces*, to which it closely adheres. The music is full of noble simplicity, beautiful melody, and strong expression. In the airs, dramatic truth is never sacrificed to vocal display; and the concerted pieces are broad, grand, and effective. Taken as a whole, the piece is free from antiquated and obsolete forms; and it wants nothing but an orchestral score of greater fulness and variety to satisfy the most modern ear. It is still frequently performed in Germany, though in England and France, and even in its native country, it seems to be forgotten.

Il Matrimonio Segreto is founded on our *Clandestine Marriage;* the plot, and all the principal incidents, being taken from the English play. The opera is of a lighter character than the comedy. The distress of the young couple, though sufficient to excite interest, is not deep; and Elisetta, the heroine's sister, has not the dark malignity of her English prototype. As a combination of gay and sportive comedy with enchanting music, this opera

is not to be equalled even by the productions of Mozart; and when performed, as it has frequently been of late, in Paris and London, by GRISI, RUBINI, TAMBURINI, and LABLACHE, nothing can be more animated and delightful. Though the brazen instruments are entirely excluded from the orchestra, and even the softer wind instruments are sparingly used, yet the accompaniments are so rich and brilliant, and at the same time so light and transparent, that no one, whose ear has not been hardened by the noisy harmony of the day, would wish them in the slightest degree different from what they are. For our part, the respite from the din of drums and trumpets forms no small part of the pleasure we derive from the performance of the *Matrimonio Segreto*.

Of the other Italian composers belonging to this period, it may be sufficient to mention ZINGARELLI, as being the most distinguished. He was born, according to some writers, at Naples, in 1752, but, according to Gerber, at Milan, in 1760. One of his earliest works was *Montezuma*, produced at Naples in 1781, which is said to have gained the approbation of Haydn. He then composed many operas for all the Italian theatres; and on the death of Guglielini in 1806, was appointed to that composer's place in the chapel of the Vatican. From that time he devoted himself entirely to the music of the church.

In 1811 he was commanded by Napoleon to

present himself at Paris, because, it is said, he had refused, as *maestro di capella* of the Vatican, to produce a *Te Deum* on the birth of the king of Rome. Be this as it may, Zingarelli became a favourite of the emperor, and was much attached to the Bonaparte family. When Murat was on the throne of Naples, Zingarelli was one of his most zealous adherents, and, on his tragical death, composed a cantata which was rigidly suppressed by the Neapolitan police. In 1813 he was appointed director of the newly-founded Conservatorio at Naples. From this time he led a life of the utmost seclusion, devoting himself to compositions for the church, until his death, which took place on 5th May, 1837.

Zingarelli greatly outlived his popularity as a dramatic composer. Long before his death his most favourite pieces were withdrawn from the stage, with the single exception of *Romeo e Giulietta*, which has been kept alive to the present time by the tragic powers of Madame Pasta. With her beautiful performance of *Romeo* the attraction of the opera will cease; for the music, though sweet and elegant, is deficient in force and dramatic character. The finest scene is Romeo's soliloquy after having swallowed the poison, consisting of the recitative, "Tranquillo io son," and the air "Ombra adorata," to which, however, Zingarelli's title has been questioned, and the air ascribed to Crescentini, the celebrated singer. Crescentini originally performed the part, and may have probably given the

composer the subject of the air, and some suggestions as to its style, as was frequently done by Metastasio to the composers of his operas; but this would afford no ground for a charge of plagiarism against the musician. On the other hand, the famous Austrian hymn, "God save the Emperor Francis," generally understood to be Haydn's, has been ascribed to Zingarelli, and there has been some controversy on the subject between Italian and German critics. Gerber, in the *Dictionary of Musicians,* mentions "Dio salvi Francesco Imperatore; Inno patriotico degli Austriaci," in the list of Zingarelli's works, giving it the date of 1798. But, in the title as given by Gerber, the words are said to have been translated into Italian from the original German by Carpani: which renders it probable that Haydn's music to the original words was adapted to the new Italian version by Zingarelli.

Many of the present Italian composers and singers are said to have been pupils of this master. Among the composers, he gave instructions to Bellini, Mercadante, Donizetti, and Costa; among the singers, to Madame Fodor, Lablache, Tamburini, and Duprez.

It is as a composer for the church, which affords more lasting celebrity than the theatre, that the name of Zingarelli will live. His oratorio, *La Distruzione di Gierusalemme,* composed in 1809, is his greatest ecclesiastical work.

CHAPTER VII.

Italian singers—Guadagni—Millico—Cecilia Davies—Rauzzini Agujari—Banti—Todi—Pacchierotti—Rubinelli—Marchesi —Mara—Billington.

The latter part of the eighteenth century exhibited a constellation of Italian performers, of which we shall notice a few of the "bright particular stars" which appeared for longer or shorter periods above the English horizon. And, in describing them, we must borrow the language of those contemporary critics who were enabled to speak from personal knowledge.

Guadagni first came to England so early as 1748, when a young man. He then resided for several years in London, during which time he was more noticed for singing English than Italian. He studied the histrionic part of his profession by the help of the instructions of Garrick, who took much pleasure in forming him as an actor. After a long interval, during which he became one of the greatest dramatic singers in Europe, he returned to England

in 1779. "The highest expectations of his abilities," says Burney, "were raised by rumour before his arrival here for the winter season; and as an actor he seems to have had no equal on any stage in Europe. His figure was uncommonly elegant and noble; his countenance replete with beauty, intelligence, and dignity: and his attitudes and gestures were so full of grace and propriety, that they would have been excellent for studies for a statuary. The music he sung was the most simple imaginable; a few notes with frequent pauses, and opportunities of being liberated from the composer and the band were all he wanted; and in these seemingly extemporaneous effusions he proved the inherent power of melody totally divorced from harmony, and unassisted even by unisonous accompaniment. Surprised at such great effects from causes apparently so small, I frequently tried to analyse the pleasure communicated to the audience, and found it chiefly arose from his artful manner of diminishing the tones of his voice, like the dying notes of the Æolian harp; but Guadagni, after beginning a note or passage with all the force he could safely exert, fined it off to a thread, and gave it all the effect of extreme distance." His temper, unfortunately, was capricious, obstinate, and unyielding; and he consequently involved himself in so many quarrels with the public, that notwithstanding the admiration excited by his talents, he hardly ever appeared on the stage

without being hissed, for some time before he left England. He died at Padua in 1786.

Millico arrived in England in 1772, about the same time with Sacchini. Both of them had at first to contend with the cabals of the partisans of the singers and composers then in possession of the public ear. "None of the friends of their predecessors," says Burney, "would allow that Millico could sing, or the new master compose. Violent and virulent means were used to poison, or at least to shut the ears of the unprejudiced public; but not with much success. Indeed at first both the music and performance were frequently hissed; but at length Sacchini's compositions were generally allowed to be admirable, and Millico's importance was manifested by a crowded house at his benefit, composed of the first persons for taste and rank in the kingdom: and, at the end of the next season, several who had boldly pronounced that neither Sacchini could compose nor Millico sing, would have given a hundred pounds if they could have recalled their words, or made their acquaintance forget that they had been guilty of such manifest injustice and absurdity!" Millico was remarkable for the dignity and sensibility of his style, and not less so for his judgment and skill as a vocal instructor. He spent his latter years in his native city of Naples.

Miss Cecilia Davies attained a high rank among

the Italian singers of that day. She went to the continent at an early age, and was the first Englishwoman who performed principal parts in the great theatres of Italy, where she was known by the name of *L'Inglesina*. She appeared at the London opera-house in 1773, where she attracted much admiration for her judicious action and her power of execution, which (Burney says) were at this time allowed to be unrivalled by those of any other singer that had been heard in England. After singing a few years in England, she returned to the continent. For many years the existence of this once celebrated singer was forgotten, her name being only mentioned occasionally as belonging to the annals of a former age, till the public recently learned, with surprise, that she had been living for many years in London in a state of indigence and neglect.

RAUZZINI was a native of Rome. After having acquired distinction in Italy and Germany, he was engaged, in 1774, as one of the principal singers at the opera in London. After a short residence in the metropolis he settled in Bath, where he resided till his death, in 1810. He enjoyed the highest reputation as a teacher, and many of our best English singers have been formed by his instructions. Braham, in particular, was his regular pupil, in his own house, for three years, and appears to have been greatly indebted to his kindness

and liberality. Rauzzini may be classed among the minor dramatic composers of that period, as he produced several operas which met with success.

Lucrezia Agujari was one of the most wonderful singers that have appeared. We have no account of her, however, previous to 1776, when she came to London, being engaged by the proprietors of the Pantheon, at the salary of 100*l.* a night, for singing only two songs—a sufficient proof of her continental celebrity. "The lower part of her voice," Burney says, "was full, round, of an excellent quality, and its compass, after she quitted its natural register, (which it was to be wished she had never done,) beyond any one we had then heard. She had two octaves of fair natural voice, from A on the fifth line in the bass to A on the sixth line in the treble; and beyond that, in alt, she had in early youth more than another octave; as Sacchini told me he had heard her go up to B flat *in altissimo*. Her shake was open and perfect, her intonation true, her execution marked and rapid, and her style of singing, in the natural compass of her voice, grand and majestic. Though the pathetic and tender were not what her manner or figure promised, yet she had expressions sometimes that were truly touching; and she would have been as capable of exciting universal pleasure as admiration, if she had been a little less violent in the delivery of her passages, and her looks had been more tem-

pered by female softness and timidity." This great singer died at Parma in 1783.

After the departure of Agujari, the managers of the Pantheon engaged Signora Georgi, afterwards the celebrated Madame Banti. She was the daughter of a Venetian gondolier, and in her youth was a street-singer: but a noble amateur, struck with the brilliancy of her voice, had her instructed in singing at his expense. She appears to have been advised soon after to try her fortune in a foreign country; for she left Venice for Paris, supporting herself on the journey by singing at coffee-houses and inns for small sums collected from the guests. When she got to Paris, she continued for some time to earn her subsistence in this manner. One evening in the year 1778, M. de Vismes, the manager of the opera, happening to pass the door of a coffee-house on the Boulevards, was struck with the sound of a beautiful voice; and, going in, found a young Italian girl singing to the company in the coffee-room. He put a louis into her hand, desiring her to call on him the next morning; and the result was an engagement for the *opera buffa*, where her very first appearance enchanted the audience.

Her engagement to sing in London immediately followed; and it was conditioned that 100*l.* a year should be deducted from her salary for the payment of an able vocal instructor. Sacchini was her first teacher, but he found her so idle and obstinate

that he gave her up. She was then committed to Signor Piozzi,* whose patience she likewise exhausted. Her last master in England was Abel; but her incapacity to profit by tuition was amply made up for by her genius and natural gifts. On her leaving England she sang with enthusiastic applause at several of the German courts, and almost all the principal towns in Italy. She returned to England in 1790, and remained for more than ten years, enjoying the highest degree of public favour. She died at Bologna in 1806, at the age of about fifty.

Lord Mount Edgecumbe† speaks rapturously of Banti, and describes her as the most delightful singer he had ever heard. "She had begun the world," says this noble and accomplished amateur, "as a *cantante di piazza*, and as such having attracted notice by her fine voice, she had been taken from her humble calling, taught, and brought out as a singer in concerts, first at Paris and then in England, as before mentioned, at the Pantheon, under the name of Georgi. But though she had the best masters, she was an idle scholar, and never would apply to the drudgery of her profession: but in her, genius supplied the place of science; and the most correct ear, with the most exquisite taste, enabled her to sing with more effect, more expression, and more apparent knowledge of her art, than many much better professors. She never was a good musician, nor could sing at sight with

* Celebrated as the second husband of Mrs. Thrale.

† *Musical Reminiscences of an Old Amateur.*

ease; but having once learnt a song, and made herself mistress of its character, she threw into all she sung more pathos and true feeling than any of her competitors. Her natural powers were of the finest description; her voice, sweet and beautiful throughout, had not a fault in any part of its unusually extensive compass. Its lower notes, which reached below ordinary sopranos, were rich and mellow; the middle full and powerful, and the very high totally devoid of shrillness: the whole was *di petto*, which can alone completely please and satisfy the ear. In her youth it extended to the highest pitch, and was capable of such agility that she practised and excelled most in the bravura style, in which she had no superior: but losing a few of her upper notes, and acquiring a taste for the cantabile, she gave herself up almost entirely to the latter, in which she had no equal."

Signora Todi, a Portuguese, was born about the year 1748, and was a pupil of Perez. She came to England in 1777; but though at an age when her powers ought to have been fully matured, she made little impression on the public. Afterwards, however, she acquired a very high reputation in France, Germany, and Italy, and is ranked among the most celebrated singers of the eighteenth century. After a brilliant career she returned to her native country, where she died in 1793.*

* At one period Todi and Mara were rival singers at Paris, and their comparative merits gave rise to much controversy. A

PACCHIEROTTI, the greatest singer of the last century, excepting, perhaps, Farinelli, was born in the Roman territory about the year 1750, and began his musical career, in 1770, at Palermo. He came to England in 1778, the public expectations respecting him having been previously highly excited by the account of him which had been given by Brydone in his *Tour through Sicily and Malta.* These expectations were not disappointed; but, though his reception was most favourable, he remained at this time only one season in England. He returned in 1780, and continued principal singer at the opera till 1784, when he left this country, after having performed at the commemoration of Handel. He spent the latter years of his life in retirement at Padua.

"Pacchierotti's voice," says Lord Mount Edgecumbe, "was an extensive soprano, full and sweet in the highest degree: his powers of execution were great, but he had far too good taste and good sense to make a display of them where it would have been misapplied, confining it to one bravura song (aria d'agilità) in each opera, conscious that the chief delight of singing and his own supreme excellence lay in touching expression and exquisite pathos. Yet he was so thorough a musician that nothing came amiss to him; every style was to him equally easy, and he could sing, at first sight, all songs of

gentleman asked another whether he preferred Mara or Todi. "*Ah, Monsieur,*" was the reply, "*c'est bientôt dit.*"

the most opposite characters, not merely with the facility and correctness which a complete knowledge of music must give, but entering at once into the views of the composer, and giving them all the spirit and expression he had designed. Such was his genius in his embellishments and cadences, that their variety was inexhaustible. He could not sing a song twice in exactly the same way; yet never did he introduce an ornament that was not judicious and appropriate to the composition. His shake (then considered as an indispensable requisite, without which no one could be esteemed a perfect singer) was the very best that could be heard in every form in which that grace could be executed: whether taken from above or below, between whole or semitones, fast or slow, it was always open, equal, and distinct, giving the greatest brilliancy to his cadences, and often introduced into his passages with the happiest effect. As an actor, with many disadvantages of person, for he was tall and awkward in his figure, and his features were plain, he was nevertheless forcible and impressive; for he felt warmly, had excellent judgment, and was an enthusiast in his profession. His recitative was inimitably fine, so that even those who did not understand the language could not fail to comprehend, from his countenance, voice, and action, every sentiment he expressed. As a concert singer, and particularly in private society, he shone almost more than on the stage; for he sang with greater spirit

in a small circle of friends, and was more gratified with their applause than in a public concert-room or crowded theatre. I was in the habit of so hearing him most frequently, and having been intimately acquainted with him for many years, am enabled to speak thus minutely of his performance. On such occasions he would give way to his fancy, and seem almost inspired; and I have often seen his auditors, even those the least musical, moved to tears while he was singing. Possessing a very large collection of music, he could give an infinite variety of songs by every master of reputation. I have more than once heard him sing a cantata of Haydn's, called *Ariana a Naxos*, composed for a single voice, with only a piano-forte accompaniment, and that was played by Haydn himself: it is needless to say that the performance was perfect.* To this detail of his merits and peculiar qualities as a singer, I must add that he was a worthy, good man, modest and diffident even to a fault; for it was to an excess that at times checked his exertions, and made him dissatisfied with himself when he had given the greatest delight to his hearers. He was unpresuming in his manners, grateful and attached to all his numerous friends and patrons."

* If we may judge from this cantata—so beautiful, impassioned, and dramatic—the world has suffered a heavy loss from the conflagration in Prince Esterhazy's palace at Eisenstadt, which destroyed almost all the manuscript scores of Haydn's Italian operas.

Many circumstances have been related, indicative of this great singer's power of moving the feelings of his hearers, which Lord Mount Edgecumbe mentions as his distinguishing excellence. The following anecdote, in particular, has been given by the best-informed musical writers. When Metastasio's *Artaserse* was represented at Rome with the music of Bertoni, Pacchierotti performed the part of Arbaces. In the scene in which the prince utters the pathetic exclamation, "Eppur sono innocente!" the composer had placed after these words a short instrumental symphony. Pacchierotti uttered the phrase, but no symphony followed. Surprised, he turned hastily to the leader of the orchestra, saying, "What are you about?" The leader, as if awakened from a trance, sobbed out with great simplicity, "We are crying." Not one of the band had thought of the symphony, but they were all sitting, with eyes full of tears, gazing on the actor.

Contemporary with Pacchierotti were RUBINELLI and MARCHESI, who have been described by Lord Mount Edgecumbe with his usual discrimination.

"Rubinelli possessed a contralto voice of fine quality, but limited compass. It was full, round, firm and steady in slow movements, but had little agility, nor did he attempt to do more than he could execute perfectly. His style was the true cantabile, in which few could excel him: his taste was admirable, and his science great; his figure tall and com-

manding, his manner and action solemn and dignified. In short, he must be reckoned, if not the first, yet of the first class of fine singers.

"Marchesi's fame had long reached this country, and he had been extolled to such a degree that impatience and expectation were raised to the highest pitch. On the first night of his appearance the theatre was not only crowded to the utmost in every part, but on the rising of the curtain the stage was so full of spectators that it was some time before order and silence could be obtained, and with some difficulty that Marchesi, who was to open the opera, could make his way before the audience. Marchesi was at this time a very well-looking young man, of good figure and graceful deportment. His acting was spirited and expressive; his vocal powers were very great; his voice of extensive compass, but a little inclined to be thick. His execution was very considerable, and he was rather too fond of displaying it; nor was his cantabile singing equal to his bravura. In recitative, and scenes of energy and passion, he was incomparable; and had he been less lavish of ornaments, which were not always appropriate, and possessed a more pure and simple taste, his performance would have been faultless; it was always striking, animated, and effective. He chose for his *debût* Sarti's beautiful opera of *Giulio Sabino*, in which all the songs of the principal character (and they are many and various) are of the finest description. But I was a little disappointed at

Marchesi's execution of them, for they were all familiar to me, as I had repeatedly heard Pacchierotti sing them in private, and I missed his tender expression, particularly in the last pathetic scene, and lamented that their simplicity should be injured, as it was, by an over-flowery style. The comparison made me like Marchesi less than I had done at Mantua, or than I did in other subsequent operas here."

Lord Mount Edgecumbe classes together Pacchierotti, Rubinelli, and Marchesi, as " the three finest soprani that Italy ever produced,"—somewhat too strong language, when Farinelli, Senesino, Gizziello, and Cafarelli are remembered,—and thus compares them with each other: " I should say that Rubinelli was the most simple, Marchesi the most brilliant, Pacchierotti the most touching singer. The style of the first was chaste and dignified; that of the second florid and spirited; while the third, combining all styles, and joining to exuberance of fancy the purest taste and correct judgment, united every excellence, and could by his variety please all descriptions of hearers, and give unqualified delight to every true lover of really good music."—Burney had previously thus compared them with each other as actors: " Pacchierotti seemed in earnest on the stage, and consequently interested the spectator. Rubinelli had great dignity in his deportment, though he discovered but little sensibility by his gestures or tone of voice. Marchesi, with an ele-

gant figure and pleasing countenance, is at once graceful and intelligent in his demeanour and action."

Two great Italian singers who flourished about the end of the last century were not natives of Italy. These were Madame MARA and Mrs. BILLINGTON. These ladies also demand notice as connected with the dramatic music of their respective countries. Madame Mara did not visit Italy till she was forty years old, having previously attained the highest reputation in Germany, France, and England. In 1788 she first sang, at Turin, before an Italian audience, and, in spite of the rivalry and jealousy of the native singers, and the national prejudice against a *tramontane* performer, her reception was enthusiastic. Equally favourable was her subsequent reception at Venice; but notwithstanding her success, she proceeded no further into Italy, and in 1790 returned to England, where she had already resided for several years.

Mrs. Billington, after a brilliant career as an English actress and singer, took it into her head, at the age of three-and-twenty, to retire from public life. Being persuaded to make a continental tour, with a view solely to amusement, she went to Italy, travelling privately. At Naples, however, she was persuaded by Sir William Hamilton to sing before the king and queen, who were so charmed that they requested and persuaded her to appear in public at the great theatre of San Carlo. She consented,

and appeared in *Inez di Castro*, an opera written expressly for her by Bianchi, a composer of considerable ability. Her success was complete; and, during a residence of above seven years in Italy, she was everywhere received with rapturous delight. After her return to England, she was at once the greatest Italian *prima donna* and the greatest English singer of her time.

CHAPTER VIII.

The musical drama in Germany—The Italian opera established in different German states—At Vienna—Gluck—At Dresden—At Berlin—Frederick II.—Hasse, Graun, and Agricola—Madame Mara—John Christian Bach—Naumann—Mislivviczek—Haydn.

In a preceding chapter some account has been given of the musical drama in Germany to the beginning of the last century. About that period the Italian opera was introduced into the principal German cities, and, for a long time, completely arrested the growth of the infant national opera. At all the German musical theatres the works of Italian musicians were performed by Italian singers: the native dramatic composers employed themselves in setting the dramas of Italian poets; and the native singers studied in the Italian school. Such was the situation of the musical drama in Germany for the greater part of the last century. But it was probably owing to this almost exclusive cultivation of the Italian style by the greatest German composers, who blended its grace and beauty with the strong and massive features which have always characte-

rised their own national music, that the German opera, when once more established, has risen so rapidly to its present high and palmy state.

The musical drama may be said to have had a separate history in each of the various independent states of which Germany consists. When the Italian opera had been established at Vienna, Dresden, and Berlin, it afterwards, through the example of these principal places, gained a footing at Munich, Manheim, Stutgard, &c., and thus came to prevail all over Germany.

It has already been mentioned that the Italian opera was established at Vienna by the emperor Leopold, who was a patron of the arts. It was munificently supported by his successor Charles VI., an ardent lover of music, who employed the principal Italian composers of the time, and engaged in his service the poets Apostolo Zeno and Metastasio. Several of Metastasio's operas were composed by the celebrated Antonio Caldara, who had been brought to Vienna by the emperor Leopold, and was the imperial *maestro di capella* when the poet arrived there. Caldara died at Vienna in 1763, at the age of ninety, after having been a dramatic composer in the imperial service for fifty years. His numerous operas are forgotten; but his ecclesiastical music continues to be held in the highest estimation for the sublimity of its character. Fux, whose name is now known only by his famous treatise on composition called *Gradus ad Parnassum*,

was also, at that time, one of the composers of the emperor's court, and wrote the music of one or two of Metastasio's pieces: but it was only the poet's earliest productions, as imperial laureate, that were composed in what must have been even then an antiquated style, by these veteran musicians. From that time all the great composers, who successively appeared in Italy during the eighteenth century, vied with each other in setting his operas.

The illustrious GLUCK may be considered as the founder of the existing school of German dramatic music; and yet it does not appear that he ever composed an opera in the German language. His musical education, too, was in a great measure Italian, and it was in Italy that he reaped his earliest laurels: yet he did not, like Hasse, become an Italian musician, but impressed upon all his works, which were produced in the maturity of his powers, the national characteristics of his country, as well as the features of his own most original genius.

CHRISTOPHER GLUCK was a native of the Upper Palatinate, on the borders of Bohemia. The date of his birth is differently stated, but appears to have been in 1714 or 1715. His father was in poor circumstances: he had settled in Bohemia, where he died, leaving his son in his infancy, and quite unprovided for. He picked up in his childhood that knowledge of music which is acquired by everybody in Bohemia; and contrived, at an early age,

to find his way to Vienna, supporting himself by his musical abilities. He picked up a little money, which he laudably employed upon his education; and had the good fortune to find a patron in an Austrian nobleman, who, observing that he possessed uncommon talents, took him into his service, carried him into Italy, and obtained for him the instructions of the celebrated Martini of Milan.

After four years' study under this master, Gluck composed his first opera, *Artaserse*, which was performed at Milan in 1741. It was successful, and procured for him engagements to compose for the theatres of Venice, Turin, and Cremona. His works gained him so much reputation, that he was invited to London, to compose for the king's theatre, then under the direction of Lord Middlesex. But he made his visit to England at an unfortunate time. It was in 1745: the rebellion had broken out, and foreigners were regarded with suspicion. The opera-house was shut by order of the lord chamberlain; and it was with great difficulty that Lord Middlesex obtained permission to open it again with a sort of *Pièce de circonstance*, of a political nature, called *La Caduta de' Giganti*, written in compliment to the Duke of Cumberland, (the Jupiter who had quelled the rebellious giants,) the music of which Gluck was employed to compose. "Gluck," says Burney, who had the account from the composer himself, "worked upon it with fear and trembling, not only on account of the few

friends he had in England, but from an apprehension of riot and popular fury, at the opening of a theatre in which none but papists and foreigners were employed." The opera was performed on 7th January 1746, before the conquering duke, in honour of whom it was produced; but its success was by no means flattering. The dances, in which the charming Violetta (afterwards Mrs. Garrick) appeared, were much more applauded than the music; and the piece had only five representations.

He afterwards brought out another opera, called *Artamene*, which, as a whole, had little success, but contained an air, "Rasserena il mesto ciglio," which for many years was in the greatest vogue in England. It is an exceedingly graceful little rondo, and is still well known to our amateurs of the old school. Besides these pieces, he produced a *pasticcio*, called *Piramo e Tisbe*, made up of airs selected from his various operas. His music, however, made little impression; and his stay in England was very short. He acknowledged, however, that his visit had been advantageous to him, as his observations on the taste of the English nation had an effect in leading him to that simple, natural, and dramatic style which he soon afterwards adopted.

For some time after his return to Germany, Gluck appears to have composed little. He was chiefly occupied in the improvement of his mind, and the cultivation of his taste, in poetry as well as in music; and seems to have been gradually form-

ing those principles with respect to the union of music and poetry, the developement of which, in his subsequent works, forms an era in the art. These principles, however, were slowly matured; for we find that he was not able to reduce them immediately to practice when he resumed his labours for the Italian stage. In 1754 he was invited to return to Italy. He produced at Rome, *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Antigono*, and *Clelia;* and at Parma, *Bauci e Filemone*, and *Aristeo*. All these pieces were successful;—more so, in his own opinion, than they deserved, because they were written too much in the prevailing Italian taste, and in a style at variance with the opinions which he himself now entertained on the subject of dramatic composition.

It is curious to observe the opinions respecting Gluck which were expressed by Metastasio about this time.* "Gluck," wrote the poet to one of his correspondents in 1751, "has surprising fire, but he is mad. He composed an opera for Venice, which was very unfortunate. He has composed others here with various success. I am not a man to pretend to judge of him."—Again, in 1756: "I am very curious to know what reception the music of our Gluck will meet with at Rome. He composes with peculiar spirit; and, according to the present taste, which is said to reign in that city, I should imagine that he would give satisfaction."—

* See Burney's *Memoirs of Metastasio.*

In the same year, in a letter to Farinelli, Metastasio says; "The opera which will be represented to-night in the public theatre will certainly meet with applause. What is there that would not please on such a day?* The drama is my *Rè Pastore*, set by Gluck, a Bohemian composer, whose spirit, noise, and extravagance have supplied the place of merit, in many theatres of Europe, among those whom I pity, and who do not form the minority of the folks of this world. Thank God, we have no want of such auditors here."

This splenetic language comes strangely from the liberal and good-natured Metastasio. But Gluck was by this time known as a schismatic, whose heterodoxy threatened the supremacy of the Italian dramatic poetry and music.

Considered as a musician, Gluck's opinions were disinterested: for he held, that, in the lyrical drama, music had obtained an undue ascendency over her sister art. The poets, he maintained, attached too much importance to the mere gratification of the ear, to which they sacrificed the truth, simplicity, and force of dramatic action. Even Metastasio himself he looked upon as having fallen into this error: and therefore, when he was about to bring his system to the test of experiment, he had recourse to a poet whose views were similar to

* A fête on the occasion of the safe accouchement of the Empress.

his own. This was CALZABIGI, a man of genius and judgment, who had himself formed similar opinions, and was gratified to find them shared by a great musician.

The opera of *Orfeo*, written by Calzabigi, and set by Gluck, was the first result of their alliance. It was followed by *Alceste*, and *Paride ed Elena*, composed upon the same principles. What these principles were, is very clearly explained in the Dedication of *Alceste* to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, an able and valuable paper.

"When I undertook," says the composer, "to set to music the opera of *Alceste*, I proposed to myself to avoid the abuses which, the mistaken vanity of singers and the excessive complaisance of composers had introduced, and which, from the most splendid and beautiful of all public exhibitions, had reduced the opera to the most tiresome and ridiculous. I wished to confine music to its true province, that of seconding poetry by strengthening the expression of the sentiments and the interest of the situations, without interrupting the action, and weakening it by superfluous ornament. I thought that music ought to give that aid to poetry, which the liveliness of colouring and the happy combination of light and shade afford to a correct and well-designed picture, animating the figures without injuring their contour. I have therefore carefully avoided interrupting a singer in the warmth of dia-

logue, in order to wait for a tedious ritornel, or stopping him in the midst of a speech in order to display the agility of his voice in a long passage.

"I have not thought it right to pass rapidly over the second part of the air when it is the most impassionate and important portion of it in order regularly to repeat the words four times, or to finish where the sense is not complete, in order to give the singer the opportunity of showing that he can vary a passage in several ways according to his own fancy.

"In short, I have endeavoured to reform those abuses against which good sense and good taste have long exclaimed in vain.

"I have considered that the overture should make the audience aware of the character and subject of the piece;—that the instrumental accompaniment should be regulated by the interest of the drama, and ought not to leave a void in the dialogue between the recitative and air; that it should not break into the sense and connexion of a period, nor interrupt the warmth and energy of the action.

"It was also my opinion, that the chief care of a dramatic composer should be to aim at simplicity. I have accordingly avoided making a parade of difficulties, at the expense of a perspicuity; and I have attached no value to the discovery of novelty, unless it arose naturally from the situation of the character and the expression of the poetry: nor is there any rule of composition which I have

not been willing to sacrifice to the production of good effect.

"These are my principles. Fortunately the poem has wonderfully favoured my views. The celebrated author, having conceived his own plan of the lyric drama, in place of flowery descriptions, useless compositions, cold and sententious morality, has substituted strong passions, interesting situations, the language of the heart, and variety of action. The success of the piece has justified my ideas; and the universal approbation of so enlightened a city has proved to me that simplicity and truth are the greatest principles of the beautiful in the productions of the fine arts."

Orfeo, the first illustration of the opinions entertained by Gluck and Calzabigi, was performed at Vienna in 1764. The first representation was attended with doubtful success. The audience, accustomed to the form of the recitative, and the long and florid airs of the Italian opera, were hardly prepared for so novel a style of composition. On every successive representation, however, it was found to be more and more interesting and attractive, till at last it received the unanimous applauses of the public.

In the following year Gluck was called to Parma, on the occasion of a court-festival. He proposed to bring out *Orfeo*, but met with great opposition from the court and the performers. The Italian *dilet-*

tanti were not influenced by the judgment of the Viennese, and were predisposed against a piece which was said to differ so much from their models of dramatic and musical excellence. Millico declined to perform the part of Orpheus, apprehensive that it would destroy his reputation. Gluck, however, was firm, and succeeded in having the piece performed. He knew that the Italians judged from feeling, and not from systems of criticism, and trusted to the effect of his music on a sensitive and enthusiastic people. He was not disappointed. Every prejudice was swept away by the very first representation, which was received with acclamations. It was performed twenty-eight times in uninterrupted succession, and the *Armida* of Traetta, who had been engaged at the same time with Gluck, notwithstanding this composer's high and deserved reputation, was not brought forward at all. *Orfeo* was immediately performed, with the most brilliant success, at all the principal theatres in Italy—at Naples, Rome, Venice, Milan, and Bologna. This last city, it is said, was enriched, during a single season, by the receipt of above a hundred thousand sequins, (fifty thousand pounds sterling,) in consequence of the influx of strangers attracted by the fame of *Orfeo*.

None of Gluck's works are more characteristic of his genius, or exemplify more remarkably the peculiaries of his style, than this opera of *Orfeo*. As a dramatic poem, too, it exhibits the talents of Calzabigi in a very favourable light. Its structure

is simple in the extreme, and the characters very few; but the incidents and situations are admirably calculated for effect and musical expression.

After a short and rather flimsy overture, the first scene discovers Orpheus inconsolable for the loss of Eurydice, and surrounded by a company of Thessalian shepherds and shepherdesses who sympathise with the bereaved husband in his grief, and join in his lamentations. This forms a beautiful and deeply pathetic chorus, interrupted with the broken exclamations of Orpheus. When they have strewed her tomb with flowers, he prays them to leave him in solitude; and when the last strains of the departing chorus have died away, he gives vent to his sorrow in a soliloquy, in which a simple and melancholy air is followed by an impassioned burst of recitative, exquisitely blended with the wailing notes of the oboes. The god of love appears to him, and announces that he has come to the aid of so faithful a votary, and that, as a reward for his truth and constancy, he shall be permitted to descend to the shades, and endeavour so to soften the hearts of the infernal deities by means of his lyre, that they may restore to him his Eurydice; adding the condition, that he is on no account to look upon her. The smooth and flowing accents in which the god conveys his behests are finely contrasted with the exclamations of surprise, gladness, and terror with which Orpheus receives the communication. The deity vanishes, and the lover, in a long scena, ex-

presses his joyful hope and confidence of success. The air contains passages of great compass, and brilliant divisions, which, however, far from being of that unmeaning kind which merely displays the execution of the singer, seem to be full of a rapture which articulate language is unable to express. This highly-wrought and splendid air closes the first act.*

In the second act the scene is transported to the banks of the Styx. A brief strain of wild and terrible harmony, from brazen instruments, comes suddenly upon the ear; and a company of fiends burst into an appalling chorus, demanding who is the audacious mortal who has dared to approach their domains. These dismal sounds, uttered in unison, are mingled with the harsh chords of the brass instruments, and fierce dances of infernal spirits. Orpheus appears with his lyre, the preluding notes of which are imitated by the arpeggios of a harp in the orchestra. He addresses the spectres in suppliant accents, and beseeches them to suffer themselves to be moved by his tears, but receives for answer only a terrific monosyllable,

* This air is not in the original Italian score, but was added when the opera was adapted to the French stage. The act at first terminated with a recitative by *Orpheus;* but this appearing cold and meagre, Gluck was persuaded to add the air, in order to give brilliancy to the conclusion. Even this would not be satisfactory now-a-days, when a full chorus is considered an indispensable termination to an act.

"No!" His strains become more and more touching and impassioned; and their effect in softening his dreadful auditory is apparent in the altered expression of the chorus which fills up the intervals between the stanzas he sings. They are at length subdued by his melody, and he is allowed to pass forward, amid the fantastic dances of the infernal crew.

The scene changes to the groves of Elysium, where Eurydice is discovered surrounded by groups of happy spirits. She sings a beautiful *grazioso* air, mingled with the sweet choral strains of her companions, expressive of the peace and tranquillity of these blissful abodes. A soft instrumental symphony, mingled with passages imitative of the songs of birds, and the murmuring of the breezes of paradise, precedes the entrance of Orpheus, and accompanies his song. He appears delighted and wondering at the objects which surround him. He is welcomed by a company of blessed spirits, whom he implores to bring him to his beloved; and they announce that she is about to be restored to him. "Though she returns to earth," they say, "she will still find Elysium in the arms of so tender a husband." With this chorus, full of the sweetest and most grateful harmony, the second act closes.

The third act opens with the meeting of the reunited pair. Their rapturous emotions are expressed in broken and hurried phrases of recitative. Orpheus calls upon Eurydice to follow him, that they

may return to the realms of day. She prepares with transport to comply, but observes with surprise his averted looks. Unable to obtain an explanation, and struck to the heart by the coldness of one who had loved her so well, she abandons herself to grief. Her husband cannot resist her tears, her complaints, and remonstrances; he turns his eyes upon her, and, with a cry of agony, she vanishes. This is the great scene of the opera; and, in dramatic power and passionate expression, beautiful melody and fine instrumental effects, it has never been surpassed, if, indeed, it has ever been equalled. Orpheus, thus bereaved, gives way to his despair in a wild, tumultuous recitative, and then sinks into the profound grief which breathes in the air, "Che farò senza Eurydice." He resolves, by a voluntary death, to reunite himself to her for ever, and is about to execute his purpose, when his hand is arrested by the God of Love, who tells him that love has triumphed, and that his spouse is restored to him. Eurydice appears, and the lovers rush into each other's arms. In the last scene, Orpheus and Eurydice, accompanied by Love, are surrounded by their old companions, who celebrate their happiness by joyous choral songs. A trio of exquisite beauty is sung by Eurydice, Orpheus, and Love; and the piece is terminated by a ballet, the last movement of which is danced to a most elegant and graceful *chaconne*.

We have given this slight outline of *Orfeo*, as

we believe, with some eminent continental critics, that it is the best and purest of Gluck's works, and most strikingly characteristic of his genius. In severe and classical simplicity of construction and style it appears to be unrivalled. It contains only three characters, besides the persons who make the choruses; though it is easy to see, by the preceding account of the share which the choruses have in the action of the drama, that they require very different performers from the singing machines we see ranged on each side of the stage in our opera-house. The part of *Orfeo* was originally composed for the celebrated Guadagni, who exalted his reputation by his performance of it in Germany and England as well as in Italy. It demands histrionic as well as vocal powers of the highest order. The part of *Eurydice*, in a musical point of view, is less prominent, though it requires a very great actress and singer to do justice to the scene in the third act. The character of *Love* is a little part, for which grace and elegance only are requisite.

In order to appreciate the style of Gluck, it is necessary to compare it with that of his predecessors and contemporaries, and then its striking originality, boldness, and disregard of all existing models, are at once perceived. If many of his phrases of melody, and harmonic combinations, are familiar to our ears, it is because they have been so often and so freely borrowed by his successors. The music of Gluck brings Mozart continually into our mind,

because Mozart is better known to us than Gluck, whose ideas seem to be the property of his successor, and to have been borrowed by the older composer from the more modern. In thus reminding us of Mozart, too, Gluck's music suffers a disadvantage: for Mozart did not merely adopt his style, but polished and heightened it. The melody of Mozart is not more natural, more expressive, more delicately adapted to every shade of feeling and passion, than that of Gluck; but it is smoother, rounder, more rhythmical—better calculated, in short, for the gratification of the ear. Not that the music of Gluck is wanting in that indispensable requisite, which, on the contrary, it possesses in an eminent degree. But Gluck, and every other dramatic composer, must yield to Mozart in the power of combining this quality with the higher attributes of truth, nature, and variety of expression. One old composer is frequently brought to mind by the music of Gluck; one, too—so much is the fame of the greatest English musicians confined within our own shores—whose name he probably never heard of—our own Purcell. Their resemblance is often very remarkable, both in their choral harmonies, and in their short and simple airs. Take, for example, the scene already mentioned, the choruses of the infernal spirits, and the soul-subduing strains addressed to them by Orpheus; imagine these associated with English poetry, and we have the very music of Purcell. Nor is it wonderful that this re-

semblance should exist. If Purcell composed without models, Gluck threw them away, No other composers were so independent of precedent, so little indebted to conventional forms. They both studied in the book of nature: and it is not surprising that, in both, similar cultivation should have produced similar fruits.

Orfeo was first performed in England in 1770, when the principal character was sustained by Guadagni, its original representative. He produced a great impression by his action, and especially by the impassioned and exquisite manner in which he sang the air, "Che farò senza Eurydice;" but the opera was injured by the very common practice in this country of *improving* it by changes and interpolations. "The unity, simplicity, and dramatic excellence of this opera," says Burney, "which had gained the composer so much credit on the continent, were greatly diminished here by the heterogeneous mixture of music of other composers in a quite different style; whose long symphonies, long divisions, and repetitions of words, occasioned delay and languor in the incidents and action. A drama, which at Venice was rendered so interesting as almost to make the audience think more of the poet than the musician, in England had the fate of all other Italian dramas, which are pronounced good or bad in proportion to the talents and favour of the singers." When it was performed at Naples in 1773, an attempt was made to substitute, in the

third act, a duet by another composer for the original; but the audience would not listen to it, and loudly demanded the music of Gluck.

When this opera was afterwards translated into French and adapted to the Parisian stage, it was received with enthusiasm. Rousseau declares that he was so transported with it, that he did not miss a single representation; "for," he said, "if so much exalted pleasure can be enjoyed in the space of two hours, it is sufficient to convince us that life is really good for something." Rousseau's suffrage was the stronger from his being a decided partisan of the Italian school.

The brilliant success of *Orfeo* induced the poet and musician to produce *Alceste*. Its success was equal to that of *Orfeo*. Gluck accompanied its publication with the exposition, which has been already quoted, of the principles, now brought to the test of experience, upon which both these pieces had been composed. *Alceste* was brought out in 1768; and for two years no other opera was performed at the court theatre of Vienna. Its publication took place in 1769.

The third opera, jointly produced by Calzabigi and Gluck, was *Paride ed Elena*, which was not so successful as the previous pieces had been. It was published, with an epistle dedicatory to the Duke of Parma, in which Gluck complains of his principles not having been adopted by other composers, and defends them against the objections of critics.

"I determined," he says, "to publish the music of *Alceste*, simply in the hope that it might find imitators. I ventured to flatter myself that, in following the path I have opened, composers would have endeavoured to put an end to the abuses introduced into the Italian theatre, and by which it is dishonoured. But I grieve to confess that hitherto my endeavours have been vain. The half-learned, the pretenders to taste, unhappily too numerous a class, and in all ages a thousand times more injurious to the progress of the fine arts than those who are entirely ignorant, have combined against a method which, in establishing itself, destroyed their pretensions.

"It was thought that judgment might be pronounced upon *Alceste* after irregular, ill-directed, and worse-executed rehearsals. The effect which this opera would produce in a theatre was calculated in an apartment, with the same sagacity with which some Grecian critics pretended to judge, at the distance of a few feet, of the effect of statues to be placed on lofty columns. One of these nice amateurs, who has transferred his whole soul to his ears, will find an air too hard, a passage too much marked, or not sufficiently prepared, without dreaming that in that particular situation this air and passage are the height of expression, and produce the happiest contrast. A pedantic harmonist will remark an ingenious negligence or a deficiency in strictness, and will hasten to denounce them as unpardonable vio-

lations of the mysteries of harmony; and forthwith a crowd of voices will join in condemning the music as rude, barbarous, and extravagant.

"The other arts, indeed, are hardly more fortunate, and your highness may easily divine the reason. The more we are determined to search for perfection and truth, the more necessity there is for precision and exactness. The traits which distinguish a Raphael from the crowd of painters are but slightly perceptible; slight alterations in the contour of a head would not destroy the resemblance, but they would disfigure its beauty. I wish for no other proof of this than my own air in *Orfeo*, "Che farò senza Eurydice;" make the least change in it, either in the time or the turn of expression, and it will become an air for a puppet-show.* In a work of this kind, a note more or less sustained, increasing the tone or neglecting the time, an appoggiatura out of place, a shake, a passage, a roulade, may mar the effect of a whole scene."

Notwithstanding Gluck's triumphant success, the acquiescence in his principles, and the applause of his practice, were far from being unanimous; and that he felt this strongly is apparent from the tenor of the above passage. When Dr. Burney visited Vienna in 1772, he found party running high among the poets and musicians of that capital, and

* We would recommend this remark to the fair vocalists who sing this beautiful air.

their adherents; Metastasio and Hasse being at the head of one of the principal sects, and Calzabigi and Gluck leading the other. "The first," says Burney, "regarding all innovations as quackery, adhere to the ancient form of the musical drama, in which the poet and musician claim equal attention from the audience; the bard in the recitatives and narrative parts, and the composer in the airs, duos, and choruses. The second party depend more on theatrical effects, propriety of character, simplicity of diction and of musical execution, than on what *they* style flowery descriptions, superfluous similes, sententious and cold morality, on one side, with tiresome symphonies and long divisions on the other."

Burney gives an account of a visit he paid to Gluck at this time, through the introduction of a musical lady of rank, the Countess Thun. The composer, then about sixty, was by no means of easy access. "The Countess," Burney says, "had been so kind as to write a note to Gluck on my account, and he had returned, for *him*, a very civil answer; for he is as formidable a character as Handel used to be; a very dragon, of whom all are in fear. However, he had agreed to be visited in the afternoon; and Lord Stormont and Countess Thun had extended their condescension so far as to promise to carry me to him. At five o'clock Lord Stormont's coach carried us to the house of the Chevalier Gluck, in the Faubourg St. Mark.

He is very well housed there; has a pretty garden, and a great number of neat and elegantly furnished rooms. He has no children. Madame Gluck, and his niece, who lives with him, came to receive us at the door, as well as the veteran composer himself. He is much pitted with the small-pox, and very coarse in figure and look, but was soon got into good humour; and he talked, sang, and played, Madame Thun observed, more than she ever knew him do at any one time.

"He began, upon a very bad harpsichord, by accompanying his niece, who is but thirteen years old, in two of the capital scenes of his own famous opera of *Alceste*. She has a powerful and well-toned voice, and sang with infinite taste, feeling, expression, and even execution. After these two scenes from *Alceste*, she sang several others by different composers, and in different styles, particularly by Traetta.

"When she had done, her uncle was prevailed upon to sing himself; and, with as little voice as possible, he continued to entertain and even delight the company in a very high degree; for, with the richness of accompaniment, the energy and vehemence of his manner in the *allegros*, and his judicious expression in the slow movements, he so well compensated for the want of voice, that it was a defect which was soon entirely forgotten. He was so good as to perform almost his whole opera

of *Alceste;* many admirable things in a still later opera of his, called *Paride ed Elena*, and in a French opera, from Racine's *Iphigenie*, which he has just composed. This last, though he had not as yet committed a note of it to paper, was so well digested in his head, and his retention is so wonderful, that he sang it nearly from the beginning to the end, with as much readiness as if he had had a fair score before him."

Though Gluck was now a "veteran composer," yet he was only about to enter upon the most brilliant and memorable period of his life. The opera of *Iphigenie*, which he had just composed, was written for the French stage. He had conceived the opinion, that, whatever might be the vocal superiority of the Italian performers, he might find in the French theatre better actors and greater attention to dramatic propriety and effect than on the Italian stage. In this opinion he was supported by M. du Rollet, a French *littérateur*, then attached to the French embassy at Vienna. In concert with this gentleman, he got the *Iphigenie* of Racine transformed into an opera; and having composed the music, received, through the means of M. du Rollet, an invitation to Paris, in order that it might be performed there. He arrived in Paris in 1774. From that period his works cease to belong to Germany, as it was to the French theatre that he devoted his talents during

the latter years of his life; and these years form a most important period in the history of the French musical drama.

After a stormy residence of five years in France, Gluck, in 1779, returned to Vienna, where he spent the last years of his life in tranquil enjoyment of an ample fortune. He died of apoplexy in 1787, at the age of seventy-three.

During the greatest part of the last century, though the Italian opera had established itself in most of the cities of Germany, the national German opera had scarcely as yet sprung into existence. Not only was this the case at Vienna, but in every other part of that great country. In all the musical theatres nothing was heard but Italian operas, composed, for the most part, by Italian musicians, and performed by Italian singers. Dr. Burney, during the whole of his tour, undertaken in 1772, for the purpose of inquiring into the state of music in Germany, does not appear to have heard a single German opera. When he was at Manheim, Gretry's French opera of *Zemire et Azor* was performed in a German translation, and by German singers, of whom he speaks favourably. "The girl," he says, "who played the part of *Zemire* had not a great voice, but her manner of singing was natural and pleasing. She had a good shake, and never forced her voice, or sang out of tune; there were two of the men who had reasonable good voices, and whose *portamento* and expression

would not have offended such as had been long conversant with the best singing of Italy."—"Upon the whole," he adds, "I was more pleased with this singing than with any which I had heard since my arrival on the continent. Indeed the Germans are now so forward in music, and have so many excellent composers of their own country, that it is a matter of astonishment to me that they do not get original dramas for music written in their own language, and set by the natives: or, if they must have translations, that they do not get those translations new set." He says, indeed, that Mr. Hiller, of Leipsic, had furnished his countrymen with a number of comic operas: but this composer is mentioned as a singular, and indeed solitary instance of a German musician occupying himself with the national opera of his own country.

Beside Vienna, the principal seats of the Italian opera in Germany were Dresden, Munich, and Berlin. In 1719 the Italian company at Dresden was so distinguished, that Handel went thither to engage singers for the Italian opera of London. In 1754, the orchestra of the Dresden theatre, under the direction of Hasse, was celebrated as the most complete and best disciplined in Europe. Rousseau gives a particular account of it in his *Dictionnaire de Musique*. It was from the dispersion of this famous band, at the beginning of the seven years' war, that almost every great city

of Europe, and London among the rest, aequired several of their most exquisite and favourite instrumental performers. When Burney visited Germany, some of the members of thc Electoral family of Saxony possessed the attainments of first-rate musicians. The Eleetress Dowager had eomposed two Italian operas, *Talestri* and *Il Trionfo della Fedeltà*, which had been published, and performed with general admiration all over Germany. Burney was present at a eoneert at Munich, where this princess sang a scene in her own opera of *Talestri*, accompanied by Naumann on the pianofortc, and her brother the Elector of Bavaria on the violin. "She sang," says Burney, "in a truly fine stylc. Her voice is very weak, but she never forces it, or sings out of tune. She spoke the recitativc, which was an aceompanied one, very well, in thc way of great old singers of better times. She had been a long while a scholar of Porpora, who lived many years at Dresden, in the serviee of hcr father-in-law, Augustus, king of Poland. This recitative was as well written as it was well expressed: the air was an *andante*, rich in harmony, somewhat in the way of Handel's bcst opera songs in that time." As a performer on the viol-da-gamba, Burney found the Elector worthy of being compared to the eelebrated Abel. At this time Dresden, in consequence of the calamities of war, had fallen from its former musical greatness. The magnifieent theatre, onee the scene of so much splendour, was

shut up; and the only musical entertainment was an Italian *opera buffa*, poorly performed in a small theatre.

The Italian opera flourished at Berlin at the beginning of the last century. The cultivation of music, as well as every other elegant art, was suspended in Prussia during the iron reign of Frederick the First. His celebrated successor, who, notwithstanding the stern prohibition of his father, had clandestinely indulged his love of literature and the fine arts, patronised and encouraged them on his accession to the throne. For music he had a peculiar predilection; and, under the tuition of the celebrated Quantz, not only acquired great knowledge of the art, but became a first-rate performer on the flute—an accomplishment which he continued to exercise till the latest period of his life.

During the reign of this royal amateur the Italian opera was supported at Berlin on a magnificent scale, and its direction was the favourite pastime by which he relieved his mind from the cares of state and the anxieties of war. When Burney was at Berlin in 1772, the opera company contained several eminent singers, the orchestra consisted of fifty performers, there was a large chorus, and a numerous ballet. The king being at the whole expense of the establishment, the entrance was gratuitous, and any one who was decently dressed might have admission into the

pit. The king always stationed himself in the pit, standing behind the conductor, so as to have a view of the score. In this position he himself assumed the office of conductor, drilling his musical troops with the strictness of a military martinet. If any mistake was committed on the stage or in the orchestra, he marked the offender and rebuked him on the spot; and if any of the singers ventured to alter a single passage in his part, he was ordered, at his peril, to adhere strictly to the notes written by the composer. His majesty was equally despotic in the pit of his theatre as at the head of his army; and it may be supposed that such severity, whatever correctness it may have produced, must have completely checked the feelings and fancy of the performers.

Frederick's favourite dramatic composers were Hasse, Graun, and Agricola; natives of Germany, but composers of the Italian school. Hasse was celebrated throughout Europe. Graun was one of the greatest of the German ecclesiastical musicians; but the fame of his theatrical compositions seems to have been limited to Berlin. Between 1742 and 1756 he composed a great number of Italian operas for the Berlin theatre, and died there in 1759. Agricola was a pupil of Sebastian Bach, and a great organist. His Italian operas, like those of Graun, were confined to Berlin. He died in 1774.

It was as a member of the king of Prussia's

operatic corps that the unrivalled MARA first appeared as a singer of acknowledged reputation. She was born at Cassel in 1749, and was the only child of Johan Schmaling, a musician of that town, who earned his livelihood partly by repairing musical instruments. When a mere infant she showed such an aptitude for learning to play on the violin, that her father gave her some lessons, and she almost immediately played beautifully. Her extraordinary proficiency became known, and her father's house was crowded with curious visitors. She was invited to the houses of the respectable inhabitants, and was frequently seen carried in her father's arms through the streets, with her little violin in her hand. He took her to Frankfort and other places, and, in 1759, brought her to London, when she was ten years old. She played duets with him in public, and excited great attention; but she quitted the violin, and betook herself to singing, by the advice of some English ladies who patronised her, but had a dislike to a female fiddler. To her early practice of this instrument, however, she herself used to ascribe her wonderful justness of intonation and facility in taking all sorts of intervals, however unusual and difficult.* She received lessons in singing from

* "In a conversation," says Mr. Bacon, in his *Elements of Vocal Science*, "that I lately had with Madame Mara, she assured me that, had she a daughter, she should learn the fiddle before she sang a note." "For," said Madame Mara, "how can

Paradies, an Italian master of some reputation; but these instructions were continued for a very short time, and she does not appear to have afterwards had any other teacher.

On returning to Cassel, M. Schmaling endeavoured to get a situation for his child in the service of the king of Prussia. She was now grown up, and had been received with the utmost admiration by her town's-people. Frederick sent his first singer, Morelli, to hear her, and report upon her merits. The report was what might be expected from national jealousy. "She sings like a German," said Morelli; and the king, whose opinion of German singing was, naturally enough at that time, very low, paid no further attention to the application in her favour. After this disappointment her father took her to Leipsic, where her performance at a concert made such an impression, that she immediately received an engagement as first singer at the little German theatre already mentioned, under the management of M. Hiller, with a salary of about £80 a year. At this period she applied herself to the harpsichord, on which she became so great a proficient that she played several concertos in public.

While residing at Leipsic, she attracted the notice

you best convey a just notion of slight variations in the pitch of a note? By a fixed instrument? No. By the voice? No. But, by sliding the finger upon the string, you instantly make the most minute variation visibly as well as audibly perceptible."

of the Duchess Dowager of Saxony, who gave her an invitation to Dresden, where her first appearance at the opera was received with enthusiastic applause. Her increase of reputation encouraged her father to hope that she might yet succeed at Berlin, and they repaired thither in 1771. The king, at first, could hardly be persuaded to hear her. A German singer!" he exclaimed, "I should as soon expect to receive pleasure from the neighing of my horse." Curiosity to hear this extraordinary German singer, however, at length prevailed. Mademoiselle Schmaling was sent for to Potsdam, where the king received her in his private room. Her spirit (of which she always possessed an ample share) had been roused by the king's sarcasm, which had been repeated to her, against German singing, and she entered the royal apartment with the coolness which sprang from wounded pride. The king, who was sitting by the pianoforte, looked at her steadily; but, as he said nothing, and did not, even by a gesture, invite her to approach, she turned aside, and began to look at the pictures which hung near her. At last, seeing the king beckon to her, she made her obeisance, and stepped forward. "So you are going to sing me something?" said the king, abruptly. "As your majesty pleases," said the young singer, as she sat down quietly to the instrument. The king listened attentively, and, when she had finished the air, expressed great satisfaction. He then

asked if she could sing at sight, placing before her a very difficult bravura song, which she sang with perfect correctness. He was delighted, paid her many compliments, dismissed her with a handsome present, and made her the *prima donna* of the opera.

Mademoiselle Schmaling was in this situation when Dr. Burney was at Berlin. She was then three-and-twenty, and in high favour at the court. Burney thus describes his first visit to her: "Mademoiselle Schmaling received me very politely and unaffectedly. She is short, and not handsome, but is far from having anything disagreeable in her countenance; on the contrary, there is a strong expression of good-humour impressed upon it, which renders her address very engaging. Her teeth are irregular, and project too much; yet, altogether, her youth and smiles taken into the account, she is rather agreeable in face and figure.* I found that she had preserved her English; indeed she sometimes wanted words, but, having learned it very young, the pronunciation of those which occurred was perfectly correct. She was so obliging as to sing, at my request, very soon after my entrance. She began with a very difficult

* This portrait of the youthful Schmaling recals the appearance of Madame Mara to those who remember her in England. Her features were plain, almost to ugliness; but her countenance was yet striking and interesting, from the genius and sensibility by which it was animated.

aria di bravura, by Tractta, which I had heard before at Mingotti's. She sang it admirably, and fully answered the great ideas I had formed of her abilities, in everything but her voice, which was a little cloudy, and not quite so powerful as I expected. However, she had a slight cold and cough, and complained of indisposition: but with all this her voice was sweetly toned, and she sang perfectly well in tune. She has an excellent shake, a good expression, and a facility of executing and articulating rapid and difficult divisions, that is astonishing. Her second song was a *larghetto*, by Schwanenburg, of Brunswick, which was very pretty in itself; but she made it truly delightful by her taste and expression. She was by no means lavish of graces, but those she used were perfectly suited to the style of the music and idea of the part. After this she sang an *andante*, in the part which she had to practise for the ensuing carnival, in Graun's *Merope;* and in this she acquitted herself with great taste, expression, and propriety." —"At the house of Mademoiselle Schmaling," Burney afterwards says, "I heard this morning M. Mara execute, with great ability, several pieces on the violoncello. He is a young man, and the son of a performer of the same name and upon the same instrument, whose talents have been much celebrated in Germany." This man had come to Berlin a short time before, and had been engaged as a performer at the king's concerts. An intimacy

took place between him and Mademoiselle Schmaling; and although the king, who was aware of Mara's dissipated and vicious character, warned his young protégée against the imprudence of uniting herself with such a man, she disregarded the caution, and soon afterwards became his wife.

After remaining about seven years at Berlin, Madame Mara received an invitation to visit London, upon very advantageous terms. The offer was not to be slighted; but the difficulty was, to obtain the consent of her patron, or rather master, the king of Prussia. On being applied to, his majesty's answer was, "Madame Mara may go if she will, but M. Mara must stay where he is." The king thought that this would prevent her journey, as she was much attached to her husband. But, to the husband, the English guineas were more attractive than his wife's society; and, at his desire, she was about to set out in company with a female relative, when the king again interposed and prohibited her departure. Finding themselves thus despotically treated, Mara and his wife resolved to make their escape; and, with considerable difficulty and apprehension, got beyond the bounds of the Prussian territory, and travelled with the utmost expedition to Vienna, where they arrived in March 1780. The moment the Prussian despot was aware of their escape, he despatched a messenger to the Emperor Joseph the Second, desiring him to arrest the fugitives. The emperor, how-

ever, good-naturedly condescended to give them a hint, that there was no resisting the king of Prussia, and that they had better get away as fast as possible, so that he might inform the king that his messenger had arrived too late. When the alarm was over, Mara appeared publicly in Vienna, where she remained nearly two years; and where, notwithstanding the cabals of the Italian singers, she was received, both by the court and the public, with the greatest enthusiasm. She next went to Paris, where at first she found a rival in the celebrated Todi; but she soon rose to a level with, and afterwards surpassed her competitor. She now received another offer of an engagement in London, which she accepted, and arrived in this country in 1784. Her long residence in England, which formed the most brilliant part of her career, and the subsequent circumstances of her life, shall be afterwards noticed.

Besides those who have been mentioned, several other German dramatic composers flourished about the middle of the last century: but they were Italians, in so far as regards education and style. The most eminent among them were John Christian Bach, Naumann, and Misliweczek.

John Christian Bach was a son of the illustrious John Sebastian Bach. Having, at an early age, lost his father, he went to Italy, devoted himself to the study of vocal music, and soon distinguished himself as a vocal composer. In

1763 he came to this country, and resided almost constantly in London till his death in 1782. He composed many successful Italian operas for our stage; and many of his airs continued in favour long after the operas to which they belonged were laid aside. Some of them, indeed, are not yet forgotten. They are simple, natural, and elegant; and bear evident marks of the Neapolitan school, in which he studied.

Johann Gortlieb Naumann was a native of Saxony, and born of very poor parents. When very young, his passion for music induced him to travel into Italy, where, after enduring great hardships and difficulties, he had the good fortune to attract the notice of the celebrated Tartini, who not only gave him instructions, but obtained for him the means of studying in the best schools of Italy. After a residence of several years in Italy, he returned to his native country, and was appointed *maestro di capella* to the elector of Saxony. He died at Dresden in 1801. Naumann's works are voluminous both for the church and the theatre. Some of his opera songs are still performed at concerts.

Joseph Misliwiczek was a Bohemian. In his youth he studied at Venice under Pescetti, and spent his life chiefly in Italy. From about 1760 to 1780 he composed many Italian operas which acquired considerable celebrity both in Italy and Germany. In his latter days he appears to have outlived his

good fortune, or perhaps his faculties; for, after producing several unsuccessful works, he died in great poverty in 1781 or 1782.

Haydn composed a good many Italian operas, but they seem never to have travelled beyond the private theatre of his patron Prince Esterhazy, and the scores of them were destroyed by an accidental fire in the palace of that prince.

It thus appears that, down to the period at which we are arrived, the Germans had not a national musical drama, and can hardly be said to have had a national dramatic musician. The German theatrical composers not only devoted themselves exclusively to the Italian opera, but had been educated in the Italian school, and wrote in the Italian style; with the exception, however, of Gluck: for, though this great man's operas are Italian or French in form, they are essentially German in spirit and character. Gluck, therefore, may be designated as the father of the German musical drama.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mozart.

Gluck's successor, as a German dramatic musician, was the unrivalled Mozart. The greatest part of his theatrical works were Italian operas, and his earlier pieces belonged entirely to the Italian school: but, even in his Italian operas, his style became more and more German; and he was the first who produced a great dramatic work in the German language and for the German stage.

During his precocious childhood, Mozart, among his other musical attainments, became well acquainted with the Italian vocal music of the time. A curious instance of his familiarity with the Italian school was exhibited during his stay in England, when he was about eight years old, and is recorded by the honourable Daines Barrington. In one of his visits to the youthful musician, Mr. Barrington asked him to sing an extempore love-song, in the manner of the celebrated singer Manzoli, who was then in England. Mozart immediately began a recitative in the Italian style, and then sang, on the

single word "*affetto*," an *amoroso* air, which had a first and second part, and was of the ordinary length, and on the model, in other respects, of an Italian opera song. Mr. Barrington then asked him to sing an air expressive of rage, in the style of the *opera seria*. He immediately began a proper recitative, and then sang an air on the word "*perfido*." Before he finished, he became so excited, that, instead of playing, he beat the keys of the harpsichord, and sometimes started from his seat as if under the influence of the passions he was expressing. When he returned home to Salzburg, and applied himself ardently to his musical studies, he is said to have taken, as his principal guides in vocal composition, the operas of Hasse, Leo, Vinci, Porpora, and other old Italian masters.

In the year 1768, when he was twelve years old, Mozart, by order of the Emperor Joseph the Second, composed an Italian comic opera called *La Finta Semplice*. It received the approbation of Hasse and Metastasio, who were then at Vienna; but in consequence, it is said, of a cabal among the singers, it was not performed. In the following year he went to Italy, where he was received with enthusiasm, and composed several Italian operas which were performed at Milan and other places with the greatest success; a proof of the command he had at that early age acquired of the style of dramatic composition then popular in Italy. Of these early Italian operas the names are all that survive. They

were, *Mithridate, Lucio Silla, Ascanio in Alba, Il Sogno di Scipione,* and *La Finta Giardiniera ;*—all composed before he was seventeen ; an age at which it would be vain to expect music flowing from the heart as the language of passions and sentiments not yet developed in the youthful mind. At that age, even in the most highly gifted, the expression of deep feeling and strong emotion must be in a great measure conventional and borrowed : and it may therefore be presumed that the world has lost little in the oblivion of these juvenile operas, graceful and elegant as they must doubtless have been.

The first opera on which Mozart's celebrity is founded was composed under the powerful incitements of love and ambition. He had laboured, strenuously and successfully, to gain honour and distinction, but had been sorely disappointed in his prospects of solid advantage from his talents. In the capital of France, as well as several places in his own country, he had met with neglect from the great, and malevolence from jealous rivals, and had returned, sickened and disheartened, to his native Salzburg, when his sovereign, the archbishop of that city, called him to Vienna. In the Austrian capital his prospects brightened, and a new charm was given to his existence by the society of an amiable girl, Constance Weber, a favourite young actress. He became passionately enamoured of her, and she returned his love : but her parents would not consent to their union on account of his want of

a settled situation in life. At this time the Elector of Bavaria, who had already shown him distinguished favour, desired him to write an opera for the elector's theatre at Munich, which was then maintained in a style of great splendour. Mozart was now five-and-twenty, in the full strength and vigour of his genius. He saw before him the means of achieving an honourable independence, and of gaining the object of his affection; and, with a heart burning with love and hope, he rapidly composed his *Idomeneo;*—a piece which he always fondly regarded as the best of his works, and which certainly yields to none of them in tender and passionate expression.

The success of *Idomeneo* crowned the wishes of the young composer. It raised him to an eminence which removed the scruples of his mistress's family, and brought about the happiest event of his life, his marriage with Constance Weber.

The title of this opera is, "*Idomeneo Rè di Creta, o sia Ilia e Idamante; Drama Eroico.*" The scene is laid in the island of Crete. Idomeneus, returning from the Trojan war, is shipwrecked, and his fleet dispersed, by a tempest raised by the anger of Neptune. His son Idamante, with Ilia, the daughter of Priam, (whose life he has saved in the storm,) and a number of Trojan captives, arrive in safety at home; but it is believed that Idomeneus has perished. A mutual passion has sprung up between the Trojan princess and her deliverer, and at the

beginning of the piece Idamante declares his love, and, in token of it, gives the Trojan prisoners their freedom. Idomeneus, with his ships, is driven upon the shore of Crete, having made a vow, as a propitiation, to sacrifice to Neptune the first person he should meet upon his landing. Idamante hastens to the port to greet his father, who perceives, with horror, that his son is the destined victim. Unable to consummate the shocking sacrifice, he resolves to send his son to some distant land, hoping to find some other way of appeasing the offended deity. He therefore orders his son to convey Electra, the daughter of Agamemnon (who had been residing at his court) to Argos, her native country. Electra (who nourishes an unrequited passion for the prince, mingled with jealousy and hatred of her rival) is full of joy at the prospect of departing with him, while the lovers are in despair at their separation. All is prepared for the departure of Idamante and Electra; but, as they are about to embark, a storm arises, and a dreadful monster issues from the angry waves, spreading dismay and death among the people. The king and his family have retired into the interior of the palace, the prince remaining in ignorance of the cause of these horrors, when a great body of the people enter, with the chief priest of Neptune at their head, who calls upon the king to look upon the ravages of a monster sent by the angry god, and to appease him by offering up the victim whom he demands. Idomeneus, thus ad-

jured, proclaims his fatal vow, and declares Idamante to be the victim. While the people are expressing, in smothered accents, their grief and astonishment, joyful cries are suddenly heard without. The prince has attacked and slain the monster, and now rushes in, to offer himself up a willing sacrifice for his country. Idomeneus is about to strike the blow, when the Trojan princess interposes, and wishes to sacrifice herself for her lover, by insisting that she, and not he, is the victim that would be most acceptable to the deity. While this contest is going on, a subterraneous noise is heard; the statue of Neptune moves; and an awful voice from heaven declares, that Love has conquered—that Idomeneus is pardoned, but that he shall cease to be king, and Idamante, with Ilia as his queen, shall reign in his stead. This *dénouement* produces the effects which may be expected on the different personages; and the piece ends with a choral strain of general joy.

This story has given room for many tragic and impassioned scenes, which are beautifully treated by the composer. He adhered, however, pretty closely to the forms of the Italian opera which were still prevalent at the time, though they were soon abandoned by himself, and became obsolete. The dialogue of the drama is carried on in recitative, mingled with air. Each of the characters has more than one *scena*, consisting of an accompanied recitative and an air: there is but one duet, one trio, and one quartet; and there are several choruses.

But during all these the business of the piece stands still : there are none of those concerted pieces in which the dialogue and action are carried on, as in the modern opera. *Idamante*, the hero, is a *mezzo soprano*, a kind of voice now belonging entirely to female parts ; *Idomeneo*, *Arbace*, (his confidant,) and even the priest of Neptune, are tenors, and there is no bass at all among the *dramatis personæ*. The airs are on a very extended scale ; and, though free from the exploded formality of the *da capo*, yet they contain a great many of the long divisions, passages, and closes, which were fashionable in the Italian music of the time. These are mingled with the beautiful emanations of the author's genius—exquisite modulations, and innumerable traits of tenderness, energy, and passion ; and the airs, with their charming accompaniments, cannot be listened to without delight. But they are not sufficiently dramatic. Their great length brings the action of the drama to a stand as often as they occur, while their artificial structure, and the elaborate style of singing which they require, render their performance a musical exhibition, rather than the expression of the feelings and passions of a dramatic personage. During the performance of one of these airs, the audience must necessarily forget the character, and see and hear nothing but the singer ; and the necessary effect of the frequent recurrence of such scenes is to deprive the dramatic action of warmth, rapidity, and interest. When Mozart composed

this opera, he appears not yet to have studied the works of Gluck, the influence of which is so apparent in the style of his subsequent compositions.

The great features of this opera are the choruses, which are full of beauty and power; and their effect is heightened by the dramatic propriety with which they are introduced. In the first act, when the storm arises which drives Idomeneus on the Cretan strand, the people, divided into groups, upon the stage and at a distance, supplicate the mercy of the gods in the beautiful double chorus for tenor and bass voices, "Pietà, Numi, pietà!" while the raging of the tempest is imitated by the wild bursts and chromatic wailing of the orchestra. The finale to this act consists of a brilliant chorus of rejoicing, and thanksgiving to Neptune, for the safety of Idomeneus. In the second act, when Idamante and Electra are about to embark for Argos, the people and mariners sing the celebrated chorus, "Placido è il mar, andiamo!" the tranquil sweetness of which forms a fine musical picture of the scene. It is followed by the trio, "Pria di partir, o Dio!" in which Idamante and Electra take farewell of the king. At its close, and as they are departing, the orchestra begins to paint the rising storm; sounds of dismay are heard from the people; the war of the elements rages with increasing violence; the howling of the tempest is mingled with screams of terror; the sea-monster appears, and the multitude fly in confusion, their cries becoming fainter and

fainter till they are lost in the distance. We know of no instance in which the descriptive powers of music are more strikingly displayed than in this magnificent finale. In the third act, when Idomeneus declares his fatal vow to the chief priest and the people, they give expression to their grief and horror in the chorus, "O voto tremendo!" accompanied by the stringed instruments *con sordini*, and the long, melancholy notes of the horns, oboes, and bassoons. The effect of this chorus, and of the low and mournful march, while the people slowly depart, is deeply impressive.* The general finale, "Scenda, amor," is simple, resonant, and joyous.

In the instrumentation of this opera the genius of Mozart appears in all its lustre. In some of his subsequent pieces the score is fuller, but it may be doubted whether, in any of them, it is more beautiful, more varied, or more effective. The combination most generally used is that of the quartet of stringed instruments with two horns and two oboes: the flutes are frequently employed; the clarinets very rarely, but, when they do occur, with great effect.† Drums and trumpets are introduced

* This chorus, and the chorus "Placido è il mar," from their extreme beauty, are often performed at our concerts. But the great error is committed of calling "O voto tremendo" a quartet, and having it sung by solo voices; thus marring the design of the composer, and losing the effect of the music, which expresses, in accents "not loud but deep," the intense but smothered feelings of a great multitude of people.

† In the chorus "Placido è il mar," he employs the *B natural* clarinet, an instrument scarcely ever used.

only in the strong parts of the choruses, and in some passages, of peculiar energy, in the part of Idomeneo. A charming effect is produced in *Ilia's* air, "Se il padre perdei," by using one horn, one flute, one oboe, and one bassoon, along with the stringed quartet; these wind instruments having florid *obbligato* passages. One or two airs, of a *parlante* character, are accompanied by the stringed instruments only. The awful voice, which declares the will of Neptune, is accompanied by trombones and horns, like the words of the statue in *Don Giovanni*. The score of *Idomeneo* remains to this day a model in orchestral writing, and is one of the most valuable studies that can be placed in the hands of a young composer.

Idomeneo, with all its beauties, has not kept its place on the stage. It has never, we believe, been performed in England, and it seems to have been laid aside even in Germany. This has arisen from the circumstances already mentioned—the adherence to the antiquated forms of the Italian opera, the introduction of the *soprano* voice in a principal male part, and the action being interrupted and retarded by long undramatic airs, instead of being rapidly carried forward by means of concerted scenes. In consequence of these things, it would be cold and heavy on the stage, notwithstanding the energy of the recitatives, the richness and descriptive character of the choruses, and the extreme beauty of the orchestral accompaniments.

In 1782, about two years after *Idomeneo*, Mozart produced his comic opera, *Die Entfüihrung aus dem Serail*, or, *The Escape from the Seraglio;* the oldest *German* opera, we believe, which still lives as an acting piece. As a drama, it is of very slight construction, and the story, though made up of commonplace materials, is absurdly improbable. Belmont and Constance are a young couple betrothed to each other. The lady, in her voyage to Sicily to be married to her lover, is taken by an Algerine corsair, sold to a Turkish pacha, and conveyed to his seraglio, along with her attendant Blonda, and Pedrillo, a servant of her lover's. Pedrillo contrives to convey to his master the tidings of their mistress; and Belmont, determined to attempt his mistress's rescue, arrives in disguise at the pacha's palace, and finds means to get into his service. He endeavours, with the help of Pedrillo, to carry off Constance and Blonda from the seraglio, but they fail, and their affairs assume an uncomfortable aspect, as the pacha is deeply enamoured of the damsel: but, by certain discoveries which take place only in an opera, it appears that the Turkish dignitary and the Christian lady are brother and sister, the pacha, in his infancy, having been carried off by corsairs. Of course every thing ends *à l'aimable*, and the lovers are united. There is an underplot composed of the loves of Pedrillo and Blonda, and the rivalry of Osmin, a ridiculous old Turk, who is smitten with the waiting-woman.

There is a great deal of beauty, but not much *vis comica*, in the music of this opera. Some of the airs are written in that concise and terse style which he afterwards adopted; but the greater number of them, though much more original in their phraseology than those of *Idomeneo*, are very diffuse, and filled with long *roulades*, flights to the very extremities of the scale, and extravagant difficulties of execution. This is the case with the airs for all the characters, not even excepting Osmin, the old Turk, whose bass voice is tasked almost as heavily as the others. The German singers at Vienna, for whom this opera was written, must have possessed extraordinary vocal powers. Some of the most prominent songs in the piece, indeed, are almost entirely made up of passages of execution; and as these are the passages which give way most quickly to the influence of fashion, the most perfect execution, at the present day, could not prevent them from appearing dry, stiff, and antiquated. Some of the concerted pieces, however, are admirable and truly dramatic; particularly the quartet in the second act, "Ach, Belmonte!" where the two pairs of lovers meet for the first time within the walls of the seraglio. The tender rapture of Belmont and Constance, and the comic light-heartedness of the humbler pair, are blended together with a charming yet very lively effect. The chorus of the pacha's attendants, "Singt dem

grossen Bassa lieder," (sing the mighty pacha's praise,) is fine ; and the chorus of Janissaries, which concludes the opera, is full of barbaric splendour.

This opera was received by the public with great applause ; but it did not escape the criticism of the Emperor Joseph the Second. At one of the rehearsals, this royal *dilettante* said to the composer, " My dear Mozart, this is too fine for our ears ; there are too many notes ;" " I beg your majesty's pardon," said Mozart, with spirit, " there are no more than there ought to be." The emperor made no reply ; and, when the piece came to be performed, joined warmly in the general applause. But Mozart, though not disposed at the time to submit to this criticism, afterwards acknowledged its justice. After playing over one of the airs which had received the greatest applause, he remarked that it was very well for a room, but too verbose for the theatre. " When I composed this opera," he added, " I took delight in what I was doing, and never thought anything too long." This delight in the act of composition is perhaps one of the things which ought to be most carefully guarded against ; for the diffuseness to which it is apt to lead may effectually prevent the world from sympathising with it.

The *Entfiihrung aus dem Serail* is still occasionally performed in Germany, though it has been seldom heard in any other country. In 1827 an English version of it was brought out at Covent

Garden by the late Mr. Kramer, the able master of his majesty's band, under the title of *The Seraglio*. But so many liberties were taken both with the drama and the music—so many retrenchments, interpolations, and changes of various kinds —that it could hardly be considered the same piece. It had a short run, but was soon laid aside, and has not again been brought forward.

Le Nozze di Figaro appeared in 1786. Beaumarchais' celebrated comedy, *Le Mariage de Figaro*, had attracted extraordinary attention all over Europe ; and the Emperor Joseph, it is said, desired that it might be made the foundation of a comic opera, of which the music should be composed by Mozart. The Italian piece, accordingly, was written by Da Ponte, then the poet of the court theatre at Vienna, a man of considerable talent and eccentric character, who died a few years ago, at the age of upwards of eighty, at New York, where he was a teacher of languages. He executed his task very ably ; preserving, without obscurity, all the details of the ingenious and complicated Spanish plot, a good deal of the distinctive features of the different characters, and the point and lightness of the dialogue. The following interesting particulars respecting the first appearance of this opera are given by the late Michael Kelly, then a young performer on the Vienna opera stage, and receiving from Mozart much kindness and assistance in the pursuit of his profession.

"Of all the performers," says Kelly,* "in this opera at that time, but one survives—myself. It was allowed that never was an opera more strongly cast. I have seen it performed at different periods in other countries, and well too, but no more to compare with its original performance than light is to darkness. All the original performers had the advantages of the instruction of the composer, who transfused into their minds his inspired meaning. I shall never forget his little animated countenance when lighted up with the glowing rays of genius; it is as impossible to describe it as it would be to paint sunbeams.

"I called on him one evening. He said to me, 'I have just finished a little duet for my opera—you shall hear it.' He sat down to the piano, and we sang it. I was delighted with it; and the musical world will give me credit for being so, when I mention the duet sung by Count Almaviva and Susan, 'Crudel, perchè finor farmi languir così.' A more delicious morceau never was penned by man; and it has often been a source of pleasure to me to have been the first who heard it, and to have sung it with its greatly gifted composer. I remember, at the first rehearsal of the full band, Mozart was on the stage with his crimson pelisse and gold-laced cocked hat, giving the time of the music to the orchestra. Figaro's song, 'Non più

* *Reminiscences of Michael Kelly*, 1825.

andrai, farfallone amoroso,' Benuci gave with the greatest animation and power of voice. I was standing close to Mozart, who, *sotte voce*, was repeating 'Bravo, bravo, Benuci;' and when Benuci came to the fine passage, 'Cherubino, alla vittoria, alla gloria militar,' which he gave out with stentorian lungs, the effect was electricity itself; for the whole of the performers on the stage, and those in the orchestra, as if actuated by one feeling of delight, vociferated, 'Bravo, bravo, maestro! Viva, viva, grande Mozart!' Those in the orchestra I thought never would have ceased applauding, by beating the bows of their violins against the music desks. The little man acknowledged by repeated obeisances his thanks for the distinguished mark of enthusiastic applause bestowed upon him.

"The same meed of approbation was given to the finale at the end of the first act. That piece of music alone, in my opinion, if he had never composed anything else, would have stamped him as the greatest master of his art. In the sestetto in the second act (which was Mozart's favourite piece of the whole opera) I had a very conspicuous part, as the stuttering judge. All through the piece I was to stutter; but, in the sestetto, Mozart requested I would not, for, if I did, I should spoil his music. I told him that, though it might appear very presumptuous in a lad like me to differ with him on this point, I did, and was sure the way in which I intended to introduce the stutter-

ing would not interfere with the other parts, but produce an effect; besides, it certainly was not in nature that I should stutter all through the part, and when I came to the sestetto, speak plain; and, after that piece of music was over, return to stuttering; and I added, (apologising at the same time for my apparent want of deference and respect in placing my opinion in opposition to that of the great Mozart,) that unless I was allowed to perform the part as I wished, I would not perform it at all.

"Mozart at last consented that I should have my own way, but doubted the success of the experiment. Crowded houses proved that nothing ever on the stage produced a more powerful effect; the audience were convulsed with laughter, in which Mozart himself joined. The emperor repeatedly cried out, 'Bravo!' and the piece was loudly applauded and encored. When the opera was over, Mozart came on the stage to me, and, shaking me by both hands, said, 'Bravo, young man, I feel obliged to you, and acknowledge you to have been in the right, and myself in the wrong.' There was certainly a risk run, but I felt within myself I could give the effect I wished, and the event proved that I was not mistaken. I have seen the opera in London and elsewhere, and never saw the judge portrayed as a stutterer, and the scene was often totally omitted. I played it as a stupid old man, though at the time I was a beardless stripling.

" At the end of the opera I thought the audience would never have done applauding and calling for Mozart. Almost every piece was encored, which prolonged it nearly to the length of two operas, and induced the emperor to issue an order, on the second representation, that no piece of music should be encored. Never was anything more complete than the triumph of Mozart and his *Nozze di Figaro*, to which numerous overflowing audiences bore witness."

During the four years between the production of the *Entfiihrung aus dem Serail* and of the *Nozze di Figaro*, Mozart's compositions consisted chiefly of instrumental music ; but in this interval he entirely changed his dramatic style. The airs in *Figaro* are short and simple ; entirely free from the diffuseness, repetitions, and florid ornaments which, in his former operas, he had borrowed from the Italian school. Amid great originality and freshness, his vocal phrases, in this and all his subsequent operas, bear many traces of the study of Gluck. In the whole opera there is only one instance of a syllable protracted upon a *roulade* for several bars: it occurs in Count Almaviva's air, " Vedrò mentr'io sospiro," upon the words, " E giubilar mi fà," where it is happily subservient to the purpose of expression. And not only are the airs written without ornament, but they are so much of a *parlante* character, and composed of passages so strictly adapted to the intelligible and em-

phatic elocution of the words, that the vocal phrases do not admit of being tampered with by the singer. An expressive appoggiatura—a delicate and sparing use of the *tempo rubato*—a glide—a slight anticipation of the following note—a few graceful notes introduced in a cadence,—these are all the liberties that a singer of taste and judgment will ever think of taking with the text of these melodies: their simple beauty rejects the aid of Italian ornament.

The action of this opera is carried on, to a much greater extent than in any piece which preceded it, by means of concerted movements. The *dramatis personæ* are unusually numerous; and as six or seven of them are frequently on the stage at once, engaged in the business of the scene, their dialogue is thrown into the form of strongly-marked musical phrases, constructed upon the rich and brilliant symphony of the orchestra, from which, as a background, the vocal passages stand out in distinct and bold relief. From this treatment the most busy and bustling scenes derive a rapidity and animation which would have been wanting, had the performers been made to speak in recitative: and as, ever and anon, the performers join in harmony of from two to six or seven parts, these scenes are full of the highest musical beauty. In this manner a large proportion of the whole opera is constructed. The dialogue is thrown into recitative occasionally, when only two persons are on the stage; and accompanied recitative is used in two or three im-

passioned soliloquies; as when the Countess is sadly musing on her lost happiness, the Count indulging in his wayward jealousy, and Figaro, betrayed, as he believes, by his mistress, giving vent to his emotions of sorrow and resentment. There are only two very brief and simple choruses, introduced in situations strictly dramatic.

The disposition of the voices, though it may have been owing to the performers for whom it was composed, is calculated to give great effect to the harmony of the concerted pieces. The three principal female parts are soprano, mezzo-soprano, and contralto; Basilio is a tenor, Almaviva is a barytone, and Figaro and Bartolo are basses. When all these voices are employed together, as in the finales, the volume of harmony is magnificent. It seems somewhat surprising that the only tenor should be a subordinate character, who does little more than join in the concerted pieces, while Count Almaviva is a barytone. This must have proceeded from the composer having found it necessary to accommodate himself to the voices of his performers.

This charming opera, from its first appearance to the present day, has been performed innumerable times in the principal Italian theatres throughout Europe, besides having been adapted to the German, French, and English stage; and its airs, duets, and concerted pieces are an inexhaustible source of delight in concert-rooms and private mu-

sical circles. The music is liable to but one objection—it is deficient in gaiety. The characters are too much in earnest, and gifted with a depth of feeling of which there are no traces in the original play. Figaro is about to be married to Susanna; and the subject of the piece is, the devices whereby this clever couple baffle the Count's attempts to prevent their marriage. To outwit his master is a mere amusement to the intriguing barber, who never has any serious uneasiness as to the result. The spirit which animates him throughout the piece is expressed by him when he says,

> " Se vuol ballare, Signor Contino,
> Il chitarrino le suonerò ;
> Se vuol venire nella mia scuola,
> La capriola le insegnerò."

Mozart converts the Count's transient fancy for Susanna into a serious passion. In the comedy he is ashamed of his whim, and says that he has been twenty times on the point of giving it up. " Qui donc m'enchaine," he says to himself, " à cette fantaisie ? j'ai voulu vingt fois y renoncer. Etrange effet d'irrésolution ! si je la voulais sans débat, je la desirerais mille fois moins." Instead of this reflection, so natural in a man of his light and libertine character, we have the deep and almost tragic passion expressed in the noble song, " Vedrò, mentr'io sospiro ;" a song posscssed of every beauty but the beauty of congruity with the

person and situation to which it belongs. The beautiful duet, too, "Crudel, perchè finorà," speaks the eloquent language of impassioned tenderness; a language which Beaumarchais does not make the Count even think of affecting; for the haughty grandee talks to his lady's chambermaid cavalierly enough, even while attempting to seduce her.

Though, however, Mozart has altered the colouring of this drama, and rendered it more congenial to his own tender and pensive character, nobody would wish a note of his music other than it is. Mozart has lessened the gaiety of the original piece, but he has greatly increased its interest. In the comedy of Beaumarchais, we find the adventures of the inmates of the château of Aguas-Frescas infinitely amusing, and we are delighted with their lively manners, and the wit and satire of their conversation; but we care as little for them as they seem to care for one another. Mozart has given them *hearts*, and made them the objects of our sympathy by inspiring them with feeling and passion. The music, too, though it has not the exuberant gaiety of the Italian opera buffa, is highly animated and dramatic; and this, joined to the excellent structure of the plot, and the rapid succession of incidents, renders *Le Nozze di Figaro* one of the most attractive and delightful entertainments that can be imagined.

Il Don Giovanni was produced in 1787. This

opera is considered the composer's masterpiece; and is too generally and familiarly known to require much remark. The subject was a favourite with the dramatists of the seventeenth century, and many pieces, founded upon it, were produced in Spain, Italy, France, and England. Mozart's opera was written by Da Ponte, and taken chiefly from Molière's *Festin de Pierre*. Mozart composed it at Prague, where it was performed with the most brilliant success. Its first representations at Vienna were not so well received; but its transcendent merits were soon recognised, and no other musical piece has ever enjoyed such general favour and such extensive celebrity.

Don Giovanni, as a drama, owes its attraction almost entirely to the wild horror of the principal incidents. The opening of the piece is striking;—the nocturnal ravisher rushing into the street with his intended victim clinging to him—the old man meeting his death from the hand of the libertine—the agony of the daughter over the body of her parent, and the frantic eagerness with which she adjures her lover to avenge his murder;—awaken a thrilling interest, and appear to be the outset of a tragic history. But all this leads to nothing. The character of Donna Anna, at first so full of energy and passion, immediately sinks into utter insipidity; and Ottavio, the lover, never becomes anything more than a mere walking gentleman.

Their purpose of revenge, so strongly announced, is exhibited only by their dodging its object from place to place, much in the style of pantaloon and the clown pursuing harlequin in a Christmas pantomime, and with as little rationality of purpose. The character of the peasant girl, Zerlina, and Masetto, her lover, also effectively introduced in the beginning of the piece, dwindle, in like manner, into nothing. All these characters are exhausted at the end of the first act; and the second act is an incoherent jumble of childish buffoonery, till we arrive at the supernatural horrors of the catastrophe. And so entirely insignificant have the whole *dramatis personæ*, except the libertine himself, become, that though, in the piece as written, they are assembled on the stage at the conclusion, yet, in performance, it is not found worth while to introduce them again, and the curtain falls at Don Giovanni's terrible exit.

The effect of the music is often much impaired by the faults of the drama. It is, indeed, hardly possible to repress a feeling of irritation at witnessing the silly trash which is associated with some of the most beautiful strains imaginable. Who, that hears the lovely trio, "Ah, taci, ingiusto core," elegantly sung in a concert-room or a private circle, can dream of the low buffoonery with which it is conjoined on the stage? And in the sestetto, "Sola, sola in bujo loco," a grandeur of effect and

strength of expression, worthy of the loftiest tragedy, are wasted on a scene of the merest farce, which has not even the merit of being laughable.

But many parts of the opera are calculated to give full scope to Mozart's genius. The opening scene already mentioned—the first introduction of Zerlina, dancing joyously among her rustic companions—the masquerade scene where Don Giovanni attempts to carry her off—the moonlight churchyard, where the statue utters the appalling "Yes!" in answer to the doomed libertine's invitation—and the appearance of the awful guest at the banquet—have inspired the composer with his finest, grandest, wildest conceptions, and given rise to effects unparalleled in dramatic music. The action of the piece is carried on, in a great measure, by means of long and highly-wrought concerted pieces; and the airs are generally very short and simple. There are only two of a different character; "Il mio tesoro," sung by Ottavio, and "Non mi dir, bell idol mio," sung by Donna Anna; both of which are in the Italian style, and largely developed. They are both beautiful, and expressive of passionate tenderness; but both (especially the latter) are protracted by long roulades and passages of mere display. Both of them, indeed, are evidently intended to occupy the attention of the audience while the decorations are arranging for the statue-scene in the churchyard, and for the concluding scene of the banquet, and this purpose

they serve very delightfully.* The voices are disposed in the same manner as in *Figaro;* the male parts principally engaged in the action being basses and barytones, while the tenor is the insipid character of Ottavio. The choruses are few and short, but highly effective and perfectly dramatic. Mozart, as may be supposed, has failed in imparting gaiety to the comic scenes; but this deficiency is little felt in a work so strongly marked with beauty, grandeur, and fantastic horror.

The case is different with *Così fan tutte*, an opera

* In the composition of these and other airs of a florid character, in his different operas, Mozart certainly sacrificed, by the introduction of mere *bravura* passages, to the Italian taste. But the Italian performers of the day required from him still further sacrifices; for, after the first appearance of his operas, he was obliged to compose brilliant airs to be introduced into them, for the purpose of showing off different performers. Several of these airs, which were introduced at various times into the *Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, are inserted, by way of appendix, in the published scores of these operas. By some musicians of the *pure* German school, it has been thought that Mozart retained too much of the Italian style. Such, it appears, was the opinion of Beethoven, who, in a posthumous work published at Vienna in 1832, entitled *Studien in Generalbasse*, and containing, in addition to the studies of which it principally consists, a number of detached observations on musical topics, thus expresses himself in regard to Mozart: "Mozart's *Zauberflöte* will ever remain his greatest work, for in this he first showed himself the true German composer. In *Don Giovanni* he still retained the complete Italian cut and style; and, moreover, the sacred art should never be degraded to the foolery of so scandalous a subject."

which in its subject and dramatic treatment belongs to the broadest farce. The story is briefly this. Two Venetian damsels (sisters) have each a lover, who profess unbounded confidence in the fidelity of their dulcineas. An old gentleman, a sort of humorist, who is a friend of the lovers, affirms that women are all alike, and that their mistresses are no better than the rest of their sex. The young soldiers are piqued into a bet, and engage to follow the directions of the old gentleman, who undertakes, on that condition, to open their eyes on the subject of female faith. They accordingly pretend to be suddenly called away to the wars, and the lovers part with many tears and the usual protestations. Presently two strangers make their appearance, in the guise of Albanian chiefs—the lovers, of course, but so transformed by means of beards, mustachios, and other appliances, as to be unrecognisable even by the ladies, to whose hearts they immediately lay violent siege. The damsels hold out a little while, but are speedily won. The double marriage is fixed, and the parties are met to sign the contracts, when the gentlemen withdraw on some pretext, and the forsaken lovers suddenly appear, full of joy at having unexpectedly been enabled to return to the objects of their love. An explanation takes place; the unfortunate jilts are covered with confusion; but the old gentleman puts all to rights by a few scraps of convenient morality, and advising the young folks to laugh,

shake hands, and say no more about the matter. The advice is readily taken, and all the parties sing, in joyous chorus, the following comfortable maxim by way of finale—

"Fortunato l'uom che prende
Ogni cosa pel buon verso,
E tra i casi e le vicende
Da ragion guidar si fà.
Quel che suole altrui far piangere,
Fia per lui cagion di riso,
E del mondo in mezzo i turbini,
Bella calma troverà."

The incidents are extravagant to the full extent allowed in the most farcical productions, and some of them are laughable from their excessive absurdity. Of this kind is the scene where the swains pretend to have swallowed poison, in consequence of the cruelty of their mistresses, and exhibit themselves in the agonies of death, from which they are recovered by the process of animal magnetism, administered by the intriguing chambermaid, disguised as a doctor.* The artifices employed to deceive the two girls are so clumsy, that their success is impossible; and the whole plot is too preposterous for sober criticism.

Such a subject as this was not congenial to the mental temperament of Mozart, "who," as one

* This stroke of satire must have *told* when this opera first appeared, animal magnetism being then in great vogue in Germany and France. The point of the jest has been lost for many years, but is likely to be revived by the Mesmerists of our day.

of his biographers says, "could never trifle with love, which was always the happiness or the torment of his life." Treated seriously, it is a gross and injurious libel against the female character; and Mozart, by making his personages perfectly in earnest, and inspiring them with sentiment, feeling, and occasionally an almost tragic depth of passion, has only rendered a matter of mere *badinage* disagreeable and revolting. Several attempts have been made to diminish the incongruity between the levity and heartlessness of the subject, and the tender and impassioned music of Mozart; one of the happiest of which was that made by Mr. Arnold, jun., when the piece was brought out, in an English dress, about ten years ago, at the English opera-house, under the title of *Tit for Tat*. In the original drama, *Fiordiligi* and *Dorabella*, regardless of their plighted vows to their lovers, yield with very little hesitation to the solicitations of two supposed strangers; but, in the English version, the damsels discover the trick attempted to be put upon them, and, aware of the identity of their pretended new admirers, retaliate upon their lovers by affecting to listen to their suit. This is surely a dramatic improvement; but it is inconsistent with the expression of many parts of the music; and, in particular, leaves no proper place for the beautiful accompanied recitative and air in the second act, in which *Fiordiligi* gives vent to the contending emotions of regret, shame, tender-

ness for her old lover, and incipient passion for the new—a morceau, which, whether we consider the beauty of the melody, the strength of the expression, or the enchanting harmony of the accompaniments, is one of the most exquisite that has ever been produced by the composer, and has no fault but that of being put into the mouth of a person who cannot be supposed capable of the feelings which it conveys. The subject of this piece, in short, is congenial to the spirit of Rossini, not of Mozart. Had it been composed by the author of *Il Turco in Italia* and *L'Italiana in Algieri*, the music would have been greatly inferior in beauty, no doubt; but it would have been more brilliant and gay, and more in keeping with the levity of the characters and incidents. None of Mozart's sombre colouring would have entered into the picture of female fickleness; and even the ladies themselves could have joined in the laugh against their sex.

It must be owing to this cause that *Così fan tutte* has been much less frequently performed than *Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, or the *Zauberflöte*, for in musical beauty it does not yield to any of them. We are not sure, indeed, if any of them exhibits such an exquisite union of all that is sweet and graceful in Italian melody, with the richness and depth of German harmony and instrumentation.

The *Zauberflöte* and *La Clemenza di Tito* were

produced in 1791, the last year of Mozart's life. His health, which had always been delicate, was then rapidly declining; and its decay had produced a degree of morbid depression of mind, almost amounting to insanity. His forebodings of approaching death, and his apprehensions of the desolate state in which that event would leave his family, alternately excited him to violent efforts of industry, and plunged him into listless despondency. When engaged in composition, he laboured with such unremitting assiduity, that his strength frequently gave way in the midst of his exertions, and he was carried to his bed in a state of insensibility.

It was while occupied in the composition of the *Zauberflöte* that he was first seized with these fainting fits, which, however, did not prevent him from completing it with great rapidity. It was, like many of his other works, a labour of benevolence, from which his family never reaped any benefit. A manager of a theatre, who had been ruined by unsuccessful speculations, came to beg his assistance. Mozart gave him the score of the *Zauberflöte* without price, and with permission to perform it at his own theatre, but stipulating that he was not to give a copy to any one, in order that the author might afterwards be able to dispose of the copyright. The opera was brought out with a success which speedily relieved the embarrassments of the manager, who evinced his gratitude

and honesty by selling copies of the score to a number of other theatres; so that poor Mozart had the satisfaction of hearing of its brilliant performance all over Germany, without the smallest advantage to those on whose account his mind was overwhelmed with anxiety.

The subject of the *Zauberflöte* is of that fantastic and mystical stamp which is congenial to the German mind, though the allegory on which it is founded has been felt in other countries to be dry, cold, and nearly unintelligible. The Egyptian mythology admitted of two contending principles in the government of the world, the one good, and the other evil; and the evil principle, as well as the good, was the object of worship, and had its temples, priesthood, and sacred rites. The priestess of the evil principle, an enchantress called the *Queen of Night*, has a fair daughter called *Pamina*, whose destiny is connected with that of *Tamino*, a young Egyptian prince. The subject of the piece consists of the struggle between the good and evil principles for the possession of the mind of *Pamina*. Tamino is inspired by the powers of evil, with a mundane and sensual love for the princess; but, by the intervention of the principle of good, this passion is purified and ennobled, and is the means of guiding the destined pair through the dangers of the world to the knowledge of truth and the possession of happiness. This is rendered allegorically, by making the Queen of Night the

priestess of the evil principle, bestow upon Tamino a magic flute, gifted with the power of inspiring love, which afterwards becomes the instrument by which the prince overcomes the trials and dangers which he and the princess encounter during their initiation into the mysteries of Isis, or, in other words, their pursuit of truth and virtue, under the guidance of Sarastro, the high-priest of Isis and Osiris, the incarnations of the principle of good. The characters and incidents employed to illustrate this piece of mystical philosophy are wild, fantastical, and (as appears from the beautiful conceptions they awakened in the mind of Mozart) well calculated to excite a German imagination; though, in our apprehension, it must ever be matter of regret that his most enchanting strains should not have been called forth by a subject more fitted to rouse the feelings and sympathies of our nature. The dramatic defects of this opera, accordingly, have always been felt in bringing it on the stage, everywhere but in Germany. In the Italian version the allegorical matter is got rid of, and the piece reduced to a childish and insipid fairy tale. In 1801, an opera called *Les Mystères d'Isis* was brought out with great splendour in Paris, consisting of the music of the *Zauberflöte* united to a drama entirely re-written, with a view to produce a more coherent and interesting plot; but the French author, though he changed the piece very materially, did not succeed in improv-

ing it, and his attempt met with little success. In England, the Italian piece has been occasionally performed at the Opera-house, but never with much effect. The only attempt to adapt it to the English stage was made at Drury Lane last season, when it was brought out under the title of *The Magic Flute.* The German drama was closely adhered to; and, notwithstanding the heaviness of the piece, the music (which was well performed) was found so charming, that it sustained a considerable number of representations.

Dramatic music, for the most part, owes its popularity to the piece to which it belongs being attractive in the theatre; but to this the music of the *Zauberflöte* (at least in this country) is a remarkable exception; for, though the opera is almost unknown, yet its airs are generally familiar —some of them as much so as the most popular English ballads. And not only its airs, but its concerted pieces and choruses, are the delight of every one who derives any enjoyment from the cultivation of music. The *Zauberflöte* illustrates the close alliance between the utmost simplicity and the highest beauties of the art. When this opera was first produced, its melodies were instantly heard in every dwelling, from the palace to the cottage—they resounded in the streets, the highways, and the fields,—and it was truly said that Mozart had enchanted all Germany with his *Enchanted Flute.* Their beauties are not of that

recondite kind which are perceptible only to the practised ear and cultivated taste of the musician; they delight equally the learned and the unlearned;—and "the spinners and the knitters in the sun" will listen to them with as heartfelt pleasure as the most refined frequenters of our theatres and concert-rooms. They reach the heart at once, and the impression remains for ever.

La Clemenza di Tito was the last work of Mozart, excepting what may be called his death-song, the sublime *Requiem*. We have already spoken of Metastasio's beautiful drama,* and of the alterations made upon it when it was set by Mozart; alterations which, however injurious to the poem, were rendered necessary by the changes which had taken place in the structure of the musical drama. In Mozart's time, the utmost charms of poetry and music would not prevent an opera, consisting of nothing but recitatives and airs, from appearing meagre and insipid; the attention required to be roused and sustained by the stimulus of highly-wrought concerted pieces, aided by the rich and varied effects of the orchestra; and it was to afford room for these that so many changes and interpolations were made in Metastasio's poem. These changes, indeed, have given rise to some of the greatest beauties in the opera—the *finale* to the first act, in particular, in which the sounds of agitation and dismay from the persons on the stage

* See antè, vol. i. p. 337.

are blended with the wild cry, rising at intervals, from the distant multitude; and the grand scene of reconciliation, gratitude, and general joy, which concludes the whole. In the airs the composer has adhered to the Italian model; and some of them, beautiful as they are, are more protracted, florid, and ornate, than is consistent with dramatic effect. The airs, "Parto, ma tu mio ben," and "Non più di fiori," each of which has a most elaborate and brilliant accompaniment for the clarinet, have been introduced evidently for the sake of musical display; and the delight with which they are listened to is attended with the sacrifice of every vestige of theatrical illusion. These airs, therefore, are of a kind which lose nothing by being transported from the stage to the concert-room. In general, however, the music of the *Clemenza di Tito* is as dramatic as it is beautiful; and there are no characters on the lyrical stage more calculated to exhibit the powers of great tragic performers than those of Vitellia, Sextus, and Titus. It is one of the misfortunes of the stage being exclusively engrossed by the ephemeral productions of the day, that this circumstance has occasioned the neglect (for the present) of the noblest serious opera in existence.

Mozart's biography is familiar to every one who bestows any attention on musical subjects, and we shall not, therefore, repeat circumstances which are well known. Some interesting particulars respect-

ing him are contained in a series of letters published in *The Musical World*,* giving an account of a visit paid to his widow and sister at Salzburg, in 1829, by an English lady and her husband. Their name is partially concealed under initials, but is evidently that of one of the most accomplished and eminent of our living musicians, whose noble edition of the ecclesiastical works of Mozart is a proof of his veneration for the memory of the composer.

On arriving at Salzburg, the travellers immediately visited Mozart's widow, the celebrated Constance Weber, who had afterwards married M. Nyssen of Salzburg, and was widowed a second time. She was much affected by the enthusiasm of her visiters for her first husband's memory.

"She is completely a well-bred lady," says the letter-writer, "and though no remains of beauty exist, except in her eyes, (such as the engraving prefixed to her biography of Mozart would indicate,) yet she keeps her figure and a certain air well for a woman who must, I suppose, be nearly seventy years of age. Her apartment, like most foreign ones, was not encumbered with furniture; and the room in which she received us opened into a closet which contained her bed; but this was tastefully covered with a bright green silk counterpane, which harmonised nicely with some flowers in the apartment; while from the windows was

* August and September, 1837.

spread the glorious panorama of Salzburg. She describes Mozart as loving all the arts, and having a genius for most of them. He drew a little, and excelled in dancing. She said he was generally cheerful and in good humour; rarely melancholy, though sometimes pensive. 'Indeed he was an angel,' she exclaimed, 'and is one in heaven now.' This was said quite simply, without the least affectation of sentiment, but probably arising from some tender recollection of bygone kindness on his part. The original paintings of those portraits she has published with his memoirs and letters, hung round the room: but the exquisite likeness of Mozart, painted in oil by her brother-in-law, she keeps carefully in a case, and refuses to have it finished, (it was left imperfect by Lange,) lest some unlucky touch should spoil the divine expression. It is much handsomer than the lithograph; the forehead is high and ample in the extreme, full of genius, the mouth replete with sweetness. His hands were small and delicate.

"Madame Nyssen thinks that *Don Giovanni* was his favourite opera, but is not certain; *Figaro* was often preferred. He wrote *Idomeneo* when only twenty years of age, at Munich, which he esteemed the period of his life most free from cares. He played the organ delightfully, as well as the piano, but seldom touched this last instrument in company, unless those were present who could appreciate him; but he would often extemporise

when alone with her. When composing he became completely abstracted; walked about the apartment, quite unconscious of what was passing around; but when once his conceptions were arranged in his mind, he needed no pianoforte, but would take music-paper, and while he wrote would say to her, 'Now, my dear, have the goodness to repeat what conversation has passed, and tell me all the news.' Her talking never interrupted him; he wrote on, 'which is more,' she added, 'than I can do with the commonest letter.'

"His own music often affected him to tears. He was once so overcome while singing the quartet, 'Andrò ramingo,'* that he was forced to quit the party, and did not recover his composure for some time afterwards. Madame repeated also the anecdote of her sitting up all night with him, while he wrote the overture to *Don Giovanni*. It was often his practice to write until two o'clock in the morning, and rise again at four. What an exertion for one of his delicate frame!

"Madame told us that Mozart's voice was a tenor; his speaking tone gentle, unless when directing music; that then he became loud and energetic—would even stamp with his feet, and might be heard at a considerable distance. Six months before his death he was possessed with the idea that some of his enemies had given him *acqua tofana*, and had calculated the precise

* In *Idomeneo*.

time of his decease—'for which,' he would exclaim, 'they have ordered a Requiem. Yes, it is for myself I am writing this Requiem.' His wife entreated him to lay it aside, assuring him that illness alone induced such ideas, and that when he was better he would resume the composition with renewed vigour. He yielded to her advice, and, to change the current of thought, composed a masonic ode, which was performed by the company for whom it was written, and much praised. He was present, and returned home quite elated. 'Did I not know that I have written better,' he said, 'I should think this, from the applause it has obtained, the best of my works. How absurd was my notion of having taken poison—yes, I must have been ill, but now give me back the Requiem, and I will proceed with it.'

"In a few days, however, his illness returned, and he relapsed into his former idea of having been poisoned. He wrote the 'Recordare' and principal parts first, saying, 'If I do not live to complete the work, these are of the greatest consequence.' When he had sketched the principal parts, he sang them over with his wife and Süssmayer, and during the performance was several times affected even to tears. Afterwards he called Süssmayer to him, to observe his directions if he should die before the work was completed. The fugue written at the commencement he desired might be repeated, and showed how he wished

those parts to be filled up that were already sketched out. It was in consequence of this filling up that Süssmayer afterwards falsely and ungenerously wrote to Breitkopf and Härtel, music-sellers of Leipsic, that *he* had written the principal part of this celebrated Requiem: but, as Madame justly observed, any one could have supplied what he had done, after the sketching out and precise directions of Mozart; and that nothing which Süssmayer ever composed, either before or after, proved him to possess the least talent of a similar kind. Three days before Mozart's death, he received from the emperor the appointment of music-director at St. Stephen's; a situation that was of comparative competence, and at once removed him from the cabals of Salieri and others. He wept bitterly, and exclaimed, 'It is too late; now that I might enjoy a little leisure and write something worthy of the inspiration I feel, I must die.' It was his highest ambition to have written an oratorio in the style of Handel; but it seems as if predestined that the composer of the *Messiah* and *Israel in Egypt* should stand alone and unrivalled in that style, by the removal of the only one who could possibly have surpassed him."*

Mozart, before he formed his attachment to Constance Weber, had loved and been rejected by her sister Louisa, then an admired vocal performer at

* Some allowance must be made here for the enthusiasm of the fair letter-writer.

Vienna. She afterwards married M. Lange, a musician of considerable talent. In 1829 she was living, a widow, in Vienna. "To-day," says the agreeable letter-writer already quoted, "I had a visit from Madame Lange, Mozart's first love, and the sister of his wife. She must have been very pretty in her youth, but seems now broken down with delicate health, and the fatigue of teaching; for necessity compels her still to give lessons. She spoke very highly of the understanding of her sister, and with great affection of her nephews, (Mozart's sons,) whom she declares she loves as well as her own children. I ventured to ask her how she could have refused Mozart. She answered very naïvely, 'He was very amiable always, but I did not love him *then*, and how could I foresee the greatness to which his genius would elevate him?' She spoke bitterly against the Viennese for their neglect of his family, and their indifference to his memory, since they cannot even point out the precise spot where he was interred, merely saying he was buried in St. Mark's burial-ground;—that although the Emperor Joseph the Second gave a thousand florins towards erecting a monument to Mozart, it has never been begun for want of sufficient funds; 'and this,' she added, 'is the German enthusiasm for good music and its composers.'"

Germany, though a musical land, is far from being, as is very commonly supposed, the paradise of musicians. Mozart struggled all his life with

difficulties, and was obliged to toil incessantly, not for fame, but for his daily bread. His widow was saved from destitution by her second marriage with a respectable man, who became, too, a father to her dead husband's children. His sister, the celebrated girl who shared the triumphs of his childhood, and whose name is for ever associated with his memory, died a few years ago in old age, and such extreme penury, that she was actually supported by charity. Beethoven lived unpatronised by the great and neglected by the public, barely able to subsist by a life of labour and parsimony, unknown and unheeded among his countrymen, even while his great name was resounding through Europe; and all because his transcendent genius was unaccompanied by the suppleness of the courtier and the arts of the man of the world. Let our musicians think a little on these things before they join in the common cry against their own country, and repine that "their lot was not cast in the pleasant places" of Germany.

CHAPTER X.

The French opera—Rameau—Italian burlettas—Disputes—Rousseau's *Devin du Village*—French burlettas—Mondonville—Duni—Favart and Madame Favart—Contemporary descriptions of the French opera—*Les adieux de Thalie.*

A previous chapter* contains a sketch of the progress of the opera in France down to the time of Jean Philippe Rameau.

This celebrated musician was born in 1683, and spent the earlier part of his life at Clermont, in Auvergne, where he was organist of the cathedral church. In this retirement he pursued those scientific researches which gave birth to that famous system of harmony which made him so long be regarded as the Newton of the musical world. He had reached the age of fifty without being known as a dramatic composer, when, in 1733, he produced his first opera, *Hippolite et Aricie*, the immense success of which excited a violent feud between his partisans and those of the school of Lulli. He

* Chapter II.

continued to produce new works in rapid succession, which at length overcame all opposition, completely engrossed the stage of the serious opera in France, and gained for him, in that country, the reputation of being the greatest lyrical composer that had ever existed. His last opera, *Les Paladins*, appeared in 1760; and he died in 1764, at the age of eighty-one.

Rameau had the fortune, which seems to have been very common to musicians of distinguished genius in France, of undergoing a great deal of factious hostility. Because he departed from the style of Lulli, he was accused of depraving the public taste, and destroying the French opera. Almost all his works at first met with violent opposition; and, when they came to obtain favour, the composer's partisans were abused as if they were heretics and traitors to their country. In the present times it is hardly possible even to imagine the extremities to which feuds of this nature were carried in France. When, at a later period, the Italian music began to gain popularity in Paris, Rameau's most violent enemies became his most ardent admirers. Finding it impossible any longer to maintain the cause of Lulli, they now placed the name of Rameau in opposition to those of the Italian composers. The matter was treated as a national quarrel; and it was considered an insult to France to prefer the music of foreigners to that of a Frenchman. According to the French fashion,

the subject was keenly taken up by the journalists and pamphleteers, and the press groaned with dissertations proving that Rameau was the first musician in Europe. Europe, meanwhile, hardly know its first musician's name. From his own day to the present, his operas, though, for a time, they kept almost exclusive possession of the French stage, have remained utterly unknown beyond the French territory.

On the subject of these once famous operas we must plead guilty to our share of the general ignorance : but they are thus characterised by a very competent judge, the Baron de Grimm : " In his operas, Rameau has overpowered all his predecessors by dint of harmony and quantity of notes. Some of his choruses are very fine. Lulli could only sustain his vocal psalmody by a simple bass; Rameau accompanied almost all his recitatives with the orchestra. These accompaniments are generally in bad taste ; they drown the voice rather than support it, and force the singers to scream and howl in a manner which no ear of any delicacy can tolerate. We come away from an opera of Rameau's intoxicated with harmony, and stupified with the noise of voices and instruments. His taste is always gothic ; and, whether his subject is light or forcible, his style is equally heavy. He was not destitute of ideas, but he did not know what to make of them. In his recitatives the sound is continually in opposition to the sense ; though they occasionally contain happy

declamatory passages. In regard to his airs, as the poet has never given him anything to do but to trifle with some commonplace word, such as *lance*, *vole*, *triomphe*, *enchaine*, &c., or to imitate the notes of nightingales by means of flageolets, with other puerilities of that sort, there is nothing to say on the subject. If he had formed himself in some of the schools of Italy, and thus acquired a notion of musical style, and habits of musical thought, he never would have said (as he did) that all poems were alike to him, and that he could set the *Gazette de France* to music. He might have created dramatic music in his own country: as it was, he merely set Lully aside by being his imitator."

Grimm's description of Rameau's personal character is far from prepossessing. "He was," says this writer, "of a harsh and brutal disposition, and an utter stranger to every feeling of humanity. I was in company with him one day when he could not conceive why somebody present expressed a wish that the young Duke of Burgundy should evince qualities worthy of the throne which he might inherit. 'What is that to me?' he said with great *naïveté*, 'I shall be dead before he is king.'—'But your children?' some one suggested. Still he did not see why a man should care about his children, or anything else, when he himself was dead. His ruling passion was avarice. He cared nothing for reputation, honour, or distinction. All he wanted was money, and he died a rich man."

It would have been a pity had such a man been *really* a great musician.

Though Rameau reigned in undisputed supremacy over the serious opera, a great impression was made upon the Parisian public by the arrival of an Italian company, who, in 1752, obtained permission to perform Italian burlettas and *intermezzi* at the opera-house, or theatre of the *Académie Royale de Musique.* They exhibited the *Serva Padrona* of Pergolesi as an interlude between the acts of Lulli's *Acis et Galatée.* This charming piece, represented by Signor Manelli and Signora Tonelli, (who seem to have been excellent performers,) had the greatest success, and, night after night, drew crowds to the theatre. The partisans of the French school took the alarm, and the admirers of Lulli and Rameau, forgetting their mutual hostility, made common cause against the Italian intruders. Ink was shed in abundance ; the literati, as usual, taking opposite sides in the fray. Among the multitude of pamphlets which appeared was Rousseau's famous *Lettre sur la Musique Française*, in which he espoused the cause of the Italian music with great strength and eloquence, though with a degree of violence and acrimony which the occasion did not call for, and which, in some measure, counteracted the author's object. "In general," says Grimm, "people of sense do not approve of the tone of Rousseau's letter ; where there are good reasons, there is no occasion for invective :"—an excellent maxim, too often for-

gotten in literary controversy. It was remarked, too, that Rousseau's opinions were not only carried to an extravagant length, but were at variance with his own conduct. While he maintained that it was impossible to compose music to French words, that the language was quite unfit for it, that the French never had music, and never would, he himself had composed a great deal of music to French words, and had actually just produced a French opera, *Le Devin du Village*.

The Chevalier de Mouhy's *Justification de la Musique Française* was the principal pamphlet on the opposite side. Rousseau was burnt in effigy by the opera band at the door of the theatre ;* and the government having espoused the cause of French music, he narrowly escaped being exiled from France.

Diderot was one of the warmest partisans of the Italian music. Pergolesi's delicate accompaniments in the *Serva Padrona* were villanously murdered by the French performers in the orchestra; and a new curtain having been put up in the opera-house,

* Rousseau was especially hated by the French orchestral players, of whom, in his writings, he always speaks with unmeasured contempt. Gretry, in his *Memoirs*, says, that while Rousseau was superintending the rehearsals of his *Devin du Village*, he treated the band so cavalierly, that they, in revenge, hanged him in effigy. "Well," said Rousseau, "I don't wonder that they should hang me now, after having so long put me to the torture."

Diderot proposed for it the following laconic inscription,—

"Hic Marsyas Apollinem;"

which was thus translated (or rather paraphrased) in one of the journals;

"O Pergolèse inimitable,
Quand notre orchestre impitoyable
T'immole sous son violon,
Je crois, qu'au rebours de la fable,
Marsyas écorche Apollon."

In 1753, Rousseau's burletta, or *intermede*, *Le Devin du Village*, was performed at the opera-house. The music consists of pleasing ballad airs well suited to the rustic simplicity of the subject, though it is difficult to discover in them the Italian style to which the composer professed so strong an attachment. This little piece had the greatest success, and is occasionally performed, if not in Paris, in the provincial French theatres, to this day.

For nearly two years the Italian company (or the *Bouffons*, as they were called) went on very successfully, performing a number of the best burlettas of their own country. But the public, when it ceased to dispute about them, began to grow weary of them. "Who would not have thought," says a contemporary writer,* "after eighteen months of such marked eagerness for this entertainment, that the lot of the *Bouffons* was decided, and

* *Histoire de l'Opéra Bouffon.*

that they would be naturalised in France? But if our rage for a thing is strong, happily it is not lasting. Levity misleads us, but reason brings us back. The monotony of the scene; the shame of not knowing the language, which people were too indolent to learn; love of novelty; want of opposition;—all concurred to produce indifference, and enthusiasm was succeeded by ennui. Such is our character in respect to amusements; we value a plaything only so long as our possession of it is disputed: let us have it without opposition, and we care no more about it."

Thus neglected, the Italians took their departure from Paris in the beginning of 1754; and their disappearance was celebrated in the journals of the day as a national triumph, which was solemnised by a splendid performance of Rameau's chef-d'œuvre, *Castor et Pollux*.

During their short but important career, the most shameful intrigues and machinations were resorted to against them. The opposite parties had different stations in the pit of the theatre. The French faction occupied what was called the *Coin du Roi;* the partisans of the Italians, the *Coin de la Reine:* the king and queen having taken different sides in the dispute. When Mondonville, a composer of the French school, produced his *Titon et Aurore*, being apprehensive of its failure by means of the Italian party, he procured the support of Madame de Pompadour, by whose orders the pit, before the doors

were opened, was filled by the king's household, to the exclusion of the usual occupants of the *Coin de la Reine;* and Mondonville's piece, of course, went off with unanimous applause.

The departure, however, of the Italian performers did not extinguish the taste for comic operas in the Italian style. French pieces of this description, the songs of which were adapted to favourite Italian airs, were immediately brought out at the *Comédie Italienne*, and performed by the French company of that theatre, with universal applause. The *Serva Padrona*, exceedingly well translated, under the title of *La Servante Maîtresse*, was performed with the original music, and drew crowds to the theatre. Rochard and Mademoiselle Favart, it was said, left nothing to regret in the loss of the Italian representatives of the master and the maid. The opening lines containing the Spanish proverb,

"Aspettar e non venire," &c.*

are thus smartly translated;

"Longtems attendre,
Sans voir venir;
Au lit s'étendre,
Ne point dormir;
Grand peine prendre,
Sans parvenir;
Sont trois sujets d'aller se pendre."

The success of *La Servante Maîtresse* led to other translations of Italian burlettas. Among others,

* See *antè*, vol. i. p. 377.

Les Chinois, translated from *Il Cincse*, by M. Naigeon, and *La Bohémienne*, translated from *La Zingara* by M. Favart, were performed with great applause at the *Théâtre Italien*, or *Opera Comique*, as it was also called.

The most distinguished among Rameau's contemporary composers for the *grand opéra* was MONDONVILLE, several of whose works were very successful. One of them is entitled to particular notice on account of the singularity of its character. It is called *Daphnis et Alcimadure*, and was first performed in 1754: both the poem and music were by Mondonville.

The piece is written in the patois of Languedoc, of which the author was a native; and the principal performers, Jeliotte, La Tour, and Mademoiselle Fell, were also from the southern provinces. The subject is a pretty pastoral love-story, of a sufficiently commonplace kind; but the attraction lay in the piquancy of the dialogue, and the musical character of the words, which were united to airs, in which the composer, though of the old French school, endeavoured to imitate the Italian style. It is very curious to observe, from this piece, the superiority of the Languedocian patois, as a poetical and musical language, to the standard French dialect. It is much more sonorous and pleasing to the ear; terminating in *a* and *at* the words which, in French, end in *e* and *er*. The Languedocians, for instance, say *libertat* and *dansa*, instead of *liberté*

and *danser*. They have no *e* mute, that great source of cacophony in French verse. They say *noubélo* for *nouvelle; péno* for *peine; armado* for *armée; determinado* for *determinée*. Neither have they the French nasal sound; the word *dedin*, for *dans*, is pronounced in the Italian and not in the French manner. They have the graceful Italian diminutives; they say, *ma pastoureléto*, for *ma petite bergere; moun soleillet* for *mon petit soleil:* and their phrases are not encumbered by clusters of insignificant particles.

A few passages from this opera of *Daphnis et Alcimadure* will offer a specimen of this sweet and musical language. The piece opens with a dialogue between the lovers. We add a French version :

" *Alcimadure.* Boun-jour, jouiné Daphnis.

Daph. Boun-jour, bélo pastouro.

Alc. Bous benéts pla mayti din aquesto demouro ?

Daph. Hélas, non dormi pus.

Alc. Peccayre, qual mal'-hou ! Equi pot bous causa parcillo languissou ?

Daph. L'amour.

Alc. Coussi l'amour fa telo péno ?"

" *Alc.* Bon-jour, jeune Daphnis.

Daph. Bon-jour, belle bergère.

Alc. Vous venez bien matin dans cette demeure.

Daph. Hélas, je ne dors plus.

Alc. Pauvre enfant, quel malheur ! Et qui peut causer pareille langueur ?

Daph. L'amour.

Alc. Comment l'amour fait telle peine ?"

The following air has the sweetness and grace of Metastasio.

" Poulido pastourélo,	" Jolie bergere,
Perléto das amous,	Perle des amours,
De la roso noubélo	De la rose nouvelle
Esfaçats las colous ;	Effaeez les eouleurs ;
Perqué siets bous tant bélo,	Pourquoi êtes vous si belle,
Q'yeu tan amourous ?	Et moi si amoureux ?
Poulido pastourélo	Jolie bergère,
Perleto das amous,	Perle des amours,
Benque me siats cruélo,	Quoique vous me soyez cruelle,
Yéu n'aymeray que bous."	Je n'aimerai que vous."

Every line shows the superiority of the patois to the pure French. What a difference, for example, between " Benque me siats cruélo," and " Quoique vous me soyez cruelle !" In short, the dialect of Languedoc and Gascony excels in simplicity, softness, and expression ; and it seems rather a pity that France should have banished to her remotest provinces a language so well adapted to the purposes of poetry and music. The singularity as well as merit of this piece made it long a great favourite with the public.

The works of Rameau, Mondonville, and one or two other composers of lesser note, together with frequent revivals of Lulli's productions, supplied the stage of the *Académie Royale de Musique*, till the reign of the French school was shaken by the arrival of Gluck. The bulk of the public made it a point of honour to support their national school,

notwithstanding the incessant attacks made upon it by the partisans of Italian music.

In the mean time the Italian style found patrons and supporters at the *Opéra Comique*, or *Théâtre Italien*, as it was called. At this theatre the adaptation to the French stage of the *Serva Padrona*, and other Italian burlettas, led to the production of original pieces in a similar style. Duni (who has been already mentioned as the successful rival of Pergolesi at Rome) came to Paris in 1757, in order to compose for this theatre. His first opera was, *Le Peintre amoureux*, an imitation of *Il pittore innamorato*, the French words being adapted to his own music in the Italian piece. This lively little drama, joined to Duni's sweet and graceful airs, increased the taste for Italian music; but still its merits were not generally understood. The public were unable to appreciate the truth of the declamation and the purity of the melody, things as yet unknown in French composition. After an interval of eight years, Duni produced, in 1765, at the same theatre, an opera written by Anseaume, and founded on our play of George Barnwell, called *L'Ecole de la jeunesse, ou Le Barnevelt Français.* This was one of the first specimens of the *opera à ariettes*, introduced about this time into France, in which the dialogue is spoken and intermixed with airs, like our ballad opera. This piece, coming under the designation of a comic opera, has not the sombre colouring of the English play. Cleon,

the French Barnwell, does not murder his uncle, but is forgiven by him, and is united to a faithful fair one, who has loved him throughout all his *égarements;* a very questionable denouement on the score of morality. It is, however, pathetic and interesting, and had great success; the anti-Italian party ascribing its effect to its dramatic, not its musical merit.

The most prolific writer of *operas à ariettes*, or ballad operas, at this period, was the celebrated FAVART. His *Annette et Lubin*, founded on Marmontel's tale under that title, produced in 1760, acquired great popularity. It was followed by *Isabelle et Gertrude, L'amitié à l'épreuve*, and many other successful pieces, the music of which was composed by the most favourite musicians of the time.

Favart was born in 1710. He was the son of a pastrycook, and, having a turn for the stage, became an actor at the *Opéra Comique.* In 1745 he became manager of a strolling company which attended Marshal Saxe's army in Flanders, and performed dramatic pieces at head-quarters. Saxe, who was acquainted with the French character, knew the effect that could be produced upon his troops by a well-timed song or joke. Favart was made *chansonnier* to the army, and employed to celebrate every remarkable occurrence by popular songs and ballads, which, being sung on the stage, immediately became current throughout the

army. The evening before the battle of Rocoux, Marshal Saxe ordered Favart to write something by way of announcing next day's battle, as a bagatelle about the result of which there was no matter of doubt. Accordingly the following couplets were sung to a popular tune, by a pretty actress, in the course of the evening's entertainments :

" Demain nous donnerons *relâche,*
Quoique le directeur s'en fache.
Vous voir comblerait nos desirs :
On doit ceder tout à la gloire ;
Nous ne songeons qu'à vos plaisirs,
Vous ne songez qu'à la victoire."

The piece was then given out for the next evening but one. Next day the battle was fought ; and on the following evening the piece which had been announced was performed as part of the rejoicings for the victory.

Favart married a young girl called Chantilly, who, as Madame Favart, became an eminent actress. She was a member of Marshal Saxe's theatrical company under Favart's management. The general fell desperately in love with her, as it is called : but she preferred Favart, and would not listen to the great man's proposals. At last Favart and she made their escape together during the siege of Maestricht. The night of their elopement was stormy ; the bridges which formed the communication between the marshal's main body and a corps on the other side of the river, were carried

away ; and the troops thus separated ran the risk of being attacked and cut off by the enemy, while no assistance could be given them. M. Dumesnil, one of the marshal's officers, went into his tent early in the morning, and found him sitting on the bed in a state of the most violent grief and agitation. Dumesnil endeavoured to comfort him, by saying that the misfortune was great, but could be repaired. " Ah, my dear friend," exclaimed the marshal, " it cannot be repaired—I am undone !" Dumesnil continued to point out that the disaster was not so bad as the general seemed to think, while he kept bewailing his fate in broken sentences. At last he perceived that Dumesnil was merely occupied with the destruction of the bridges. " What," cried he, " is it the bridges you are talking about all this while ?—That is nothing—I can put it to rights in a couple of hours. But, Chantilly—I have lost her—she has deserted me !" The hero of the age, whom the most momentous crisis never deprived of an hour's sleep, had passed the night in despair, because a little actress had run away from him. But this was not the worst of the story. Soon after their escape the young couple married ; and Marshal Saxe, enraged at his disappointment, applied for a *lettre de cachet* to carry off the wife from the husband. This flagitious piece of tyranny was actually perpetrated ! The *lettre de cachet* was granted by Louis the Fifteenth ; Madame Favart was seized and imprisoned in a convent in

the country, till her firmness was overcome by long confinement, and she consented to become the mistress of this powerful oppressor. She was afterwards a favourite actress at the *Théâtre Italien*, and died in 1772, at the age of forty-five.

Favart died in 1792. He wrote above sixty pieces for the comic opera, which have a great deal of wit and gaiety, accompanied with delicacy and elegance of style. His best works were published in 1809, under the title of *Théâtre choisi de Favart*, and are well worthy of perusal.

In Grimm's "Correspondance" for the year 1765, there is a satirical *jeu d'esprit*, in the form of a letter from a young gentleman of Schaffhausen, who has taken a trip to Paris to see the world, and gives his "dear and much honoured mother" a *naive* account of his experiences and reflections. Among other places he visits the theatres. He sees, at the *Opera Comique*, *Le Barnevelt Français*; and is confounded by its morality, but charmed with Duni's music. While he is musing on what he has seen and heard, he overhears a fat man say to his neighbour, "I would advise the players to strike all the music out of this piece. It is too interesting, and really, in spite of the music, one can't help crying at it."—"This remark," says our letter-writer, "amazed me. The music had made me cry three or four times in the course of the piece; I had thought all my life that nothing was so apt to move the feelings as music; but I found

it was all a mistakc. So I went to the grand opera, that I might discover the true objcct of music.

"The piece was *Castor and Pollux*, admitted by all France to be the finest that ever appeared in any theatre in the world. All the rank and fashion of the capital crowded to see it, and whenever it was performed it was hardly possible to get into the house. I did all I could to look like a Frenchman and a man of taste, but I got so weary, the screams of the actors and actresses affected me so much, that I was actually in a cold perspiration, and felt every moment on the point of being taken ill. There was nevertheless a splendid funeral in the second act; two Bcnedictines kcpt watch by Castor's bier, and a fine service in plain chant was sung for the deceased. My only wonder was, that people should be so eager to pay for a show which they could see every day for nothing in the churches. The whole proceedings of the opera, besides, struck me as very queer and odd. The actors kept singing and dancing alternately, and never to the purpose. The piece ended with every act, and then had to begin again; till at last *Castor* was fairly killed, buried, brought to life again, and reccived into paradise. To celebrate his apotheosis, thc dancers, male and female, took the names of stars and planets, and danced a *chaconne:* and while the moon, who was called Mlle. Preslin, placed herself between M. Vestris, who was the sun, and Mlle. Allard, who was the earth, the foot-lights were lowered to imitate an

eclipse. This ingenious idea was received with great applause; but still it appeared to me rather strange that a terrestrial eclipse should extend all over Olympus, the scene of the piece, and darken not only the whole planetary system but the sun itself. In short, my dear and honoured mother, I found myself so completely at sea, and so far removed from all the received notions on the subject, that had I been left to myself I should infallibly have set down as a showy and tiresome piece of child's play a thing that is looked upon here as the masterpiece of the human mind, and the honour and glory of France."

Goldoni, in his *Memoirs*, gives an account of the impression made upon him by a visit to the French opera at this time.

"I seated myself in the amphitheatre, which is in front of the stage, in form of a semicircle, the seats being raised in gradations one above another. This is the best place in the house for seeing and hearing. I was content with my situation, and pitied the audience in the pit, who were standing, and closely crowded together.

"The piece commenced; and, notwithstanding my favourable situation, I could not hear a word. I waited, however, patiently for the airs, expecting that I should at least be entertained by the music. The dancers made their appearance, and I found the act finished without having heard, as I thought, a single air. I made this remark to a gentleman

who sat by me; he laughed, and assured me there had been six airs in the scenes which we had heard.

"What!" said I, "I am not deaf. The instruments never ceased accompanying the voices, sometimes more loudly, sometimes more slowly than usual; but I took the whole for recitative.

"My companion interrupted me—'Look, look, there is Vestris, the most elegant, powerful, and accomplished dancer in Europe.'

"I saw a rustic dance, in which this shepherd of the Arno triumphed over the shepherds of the Seine. A minute afterwards, three characters sang at the same time. This was a trio, which I comprehended as little as the recitative. The first act then closed.

"As nothing takes place between the acts of the French opera, the second act began immediately. I heard the same sort of music and felt the same weariness as before. I gave up the drama and its accompaniments, and began to attend to the *ensemble* of the spectacle, which I found surprising. The principal dancers, male and female, had arrived at an astonishing pitch of perfection, and the *corps de ballet* was very numerous and elegant. The music of the choruses appeared more agreeable than that of the drama. I recognised the psalms of Corelli, Biffi, and Clari. The decorations were superb, the machines well contrived and

admirably executed. The dresses were very rich, and the stage always well filled with people.

"Everything was grand, beautiful, and magnificent except the music. At the end of the drama there was a sort of *chaconne* sung by an actress who had not appeared among the characters of the drama, and accompanied by choruses and dancing. This was an agreeable surprise, and might have enlivened the piece; but, after all, it was a hymn rather than an air.

"When the curtain fell, I was asked by all my acquaintances how I liked the opera. I answered, without a moment's reflection, 'It is a paradise for the eyes, but a hell for the ears.' This impertinent and inconsiderate reply made some laugh and others look very angry. Two gentlemen of the king's chapel thought it excellent. The author of the music was not far from me, and perhaps overheard what I said. I was much concerned, for he was a worthy man. *Requiescat in pace.*

"I was present some days afterwards at the representation of *Castor and Pollux*; and the drama, which was exceedingly well written and splendidly performed, reconciled me a little to the French music. I soon perceived the difference between the music of Rameau and that which had displeased me so much. I was intimate with this celebrated composer, for whose talents and learning I had the highest respect; but I must be sincere. Rameau

distinguished himself, and produced a great revolution in France in instrumental music; but in vocal music he made no essential change."

A lively satire on the French grand opera appeared about this time in the shape of a little piece, called *Les Adieux de Thalie*, which was performed at the *Théâtre Italien*.

The performers are assembled on the stage: a composer enters and tells them that he will let them hear a serious opera which he wishes to bring out.

> " J'apporte un opéra, qu'on doit trouver sublime,
> Car il vient de fort loin; des cris, des passions,
> De l'amour, de l'effroi, des decorations;
> Et le tout, couronné d'un ballet pantomime."

" What!" exclaims one of the actors—" a serious opera at this theatre?"

" Yes," replies the musician, " it is not in your way, I know; but I bring you something in the serious style, that you may judge of my talents in the comic:

> " Ce n'est que par degrés qu'on peut arriver là.
> Malheur à qui trop tôt prend son essai lyrique!
> Moi, pour atteindre à l'opéra comique,
> J'ai voulu m'essayer par un grand opéra."

The composer then explains the subject of his grand opera. It is in three acts, and comprised in six lines. This, he says, is the argument:

" Un jeune prince Américain
Est amoureux d'une jeune princesse.
Cet amant, qui périt au milieu de la pièce,
Par le secours d'un dieu ressuscite à la fin.
Le sujet est tout neuf ——."

He goes to the side, and calls on his performers to come forward :

" Vous, peuples, entrez, qu'on s'avance !"

To the singers he says,

" Vous, tâchez de prendre le ton."

To the dancers,

" Vous, le jarret tendu, partez bien en cadence ;
Enfin, suivez tous mon bâton."

He flourishes his baton, the overture is played, and the piece begins.

FIRST ACT.

" *La Princesse.* Cher prince, on nous unit.
Le Prince. J'en suis ravi, princesse.
Peuples, chantez, dansez, montrez votre allegresse !
Chœur. Chantons, dansons, montrons notre allegresse !"

End of the First Act.

ACT SECOND.

" *La Princesse.* Amour !"

Here is a noise of fighting, which frightens the princess, who goes to the side-scene to faint. The prince enters, pursued by his enemies : after a

combat, he is mortally wounded. The princess rushes in.

" Cher prince !
Le Prince. Hélas !
La Princesse. Quoi !
Le Prince. J'expire !
Le Princesse. O malheur !
Peuples, chantez, dansez, montrez votre douleur !
Chœur. Chantons, dansons, montrons notre douleur !"

The second act ends with a dead march.

ACT THIRD.

The composer begins by a complimentary speech to the orchestra. Then, holding his hat like a buckler, and his cane like a lance, he jumps on a chair and exclaims,

" Pallas te rend le jour !
Le Prince. Où suis-je ?
Peuples, chantez, dansez, célébrez ce prodige !
Chœur. Chantons, dansons, célébrons ce prodige !"

End of the Third Act.

Then the composer, by way of epilogue, addresses the audience, —

" Vous êtes enchantés ! je le lis dans vos yeux,
Et n'en suis point surpris ; mais, mesdames, de grâce,
L'éloge, quoique dû, me gêne et m'embarrasse :
Attendez que je sois éloigné de ces lieux.

Thomassin, who personated the musician, performed also the parts of the prince and princess,

making his acting and singing a capital caricature of the French serious opera. This *jeu d'esprit* produced great amusement.*

* We find the account of this performance in the *Annales Dramatiques*. In Weber's eccentric satirical work, published after his death, entitled *Tonkunstler's Leben*, (The Life of a Composer,) it is said that the *jeu d'esprit* appeared in 1670, in one of the Paris Journals. It appears to have suggested to Weber two others of a similar kind, by way of satire on the Italian and the German opera. The Italian opera is caricatured in the following *grand scena*, "previous to which," says Weber, "a noise is made in the orchestra merely for the purpose of procuring silence;—this in Italy is called an overture.

"GRAND SCENA.

(*Recit.*) Oh Dio! ——addio!
(*Arioso.*) Oh! non pianger, mio bene!
Ti lascio, idol mio!
Oimè!
(*Allegro.*) Già la tromba suona;
Per te morir io voglio.
(*Più stretto*) O felicità!

[On the *tà* a trill of a dozen bars; the public applaud furiously.]

DUETTO.

"Caro!
Cara!
(*A due.*) Sorte amara!

[On the *amara*, for the sake of the *a*, a series of arpeggio passages of the sweetest kind.]

(*Allegro.*) O barbaro tormento!

[Nobody notices this passage, till one of the cognoscenti cries out *bravo ! brava !* when instantly the whole audience chime in fortissimo.]"

Weber then gives us a whole German opera, sufficiently brief, but quite *alla Tedesca.* While writing, he must have been indulging in a sly laugh at the subject of his own *Freisehütz.* The opera is entitled

"AGNES BERNAUERIN,

A romantic national melodrama. Dramatis personæ, as many as are necessary. Scene, the heart of Germany.

FIRST SCENE—Scenic transformations.

SECOND SCENE.

Agnes. Alas ! my soul is enfeebled, and my spirits spent.

Brunhilde. O, madam, attempt not to fathom the unfathomable depths of human suffering. If you noble ladies take it into your heads to fall in love with misery and distress, you must excuse us for our dulness in not being so susceptible.

Agnes. Let us repair to the castle garden. The gloom of its bower will better accord with the dismal anticipation of my destiny, for I must anticipate it. [*Exit.*

Scene changes. Duke and followers.

Duke. Follow me, sir knight, to the castle hall. There, amid the festive pomp, shall she give you her hand. Should she refuse, in the gloom of the donjon-keep shall vipers and serpents, according to custom—you understand me— [*Exeunt.*

Scene changes. Albreeht appears.

Albrecht. Caspar, follow me.

Seene changes. A Spirit appears in a warning attitude.

Albreeht. What art thou, mysterious being ?

Spirit. I have power to do all things. Hasten, noble youth; fear not—depend upon it I shall save you. Away!

Albrecht. To save her or die!

Two Minstrels appear.

Minstrels. Wait, noble lord. We come to sing you the history of all this.

FINALE.

[*Rocky forest scenery. To the left, in the background, a castle; opposite, a vineyard; more in front, a hermit's cell. To the left, in the foreground, a cavern, somewhat further a bower; in the centre two hollow trees; further on, a subterraneous passage.*]

Hermit enters, singing a prayer. Agnes sings an air in the castle, united with which is a chorus of vintagers from the opposite side. Albrecht is seen slumbering in the bower, and sings in his dream in interrupted tones. Caspar, through fear, sings a polonaise from the hollow trees. Robbers in the cavern sing a wild chorus. Protecting genii hover in the air over Albrecht. Various noises heard from behind the scenes. Warlike tumult. A distant march from the opposite side—of course all together. Two thunderbolts fall at opposite sides, and are heard to crash something or other.]

All. Ha!

The curtain falls.

ACT SECOND.

[*A Funeral March. Agnes is conducted over the bridge of Straubing; in the middle of the bridge her clothes are caught by a nail, and she remains hanging over the stream.*]

Albrecht enters with travellers.

[Here an occasional air is introduced.]

(*Recit.*) Hasten, my friends, lose not a single moment;
If we delay, she may be lost for ever!
Swear!
(*Chorus.*) We swear!
(*Albrecht.*) O oath!
(*Allegro.* Though rocks should oppose me,
Though seas should enclose me,
I never would waver,
But hasten to save her.
Fate threatens to sever
Her life-thread, but never
That prize shall he get;
Ah, grave! thou art waiting
To take this sweet bait in,
But she'll cheat thee yet.
(*Arioso.*) O sweet little flower,
Though fate o'er thee lower,
Yet soon shall my power
Restore thee,
And o'er thee
Raise up thy fallen bower.
(*Chorus.*) See the hero wildly raving!
See the maid his succour craving!
(*Albrecht.*) In solemn mood how I delight
To trace the passions' mystic flight;
As o'er my soul they dance in turn,
While now I freeze and now I burn.
(*Più stretto.*) But I will not waver;
I'll hasten to save her.
(*Chorus.*) Hasten!
(*Albrecht.*) I never will waver.
(*Chorus.*) No!
(*Albrecht.*) I hasten to save her.
To save her I hasten,
I hasten to save her!

(On the word "*save*" a cadence of a quarter of an hour.)
(*Chorus.*) On to death or victory!

[*They all swim through the water. The Chancellor dashes out his brains against a stake. Albrecht rushes in with his mistress in his arms. Enter the Duke in a rage.*]

(*Albrecht.*) Father!

(The Duke is instantly touched, and blesses the kneeling pair.)

Final Chorus. This bridge, an arch of glory,
Shall flourish famed in story.
Now is an end of grief and pain,
And every thing's set right again.

End of the Drama."

This spirited translation is taken, with a few slight alterations, from the *Harmonicon.*

CHAPTER XI.

Sedaine—Gretry—Arrival of Gluck—Patronised by the French party—Arrival of Piccini—His *Roland*—The Gluckists and Piccinists—Operas by Gluck and by Piccini—Mademoiselle Laguerre—Rebellion at the Opera—Musical Feuds.

About the year 1761, Sedaine began to distinguish himself as a writer of comic operas. His *On ne s'avise jamais de tout*, *Le Roi et le Fermier*, *Rose et Colas*, and *Le Déserteur*, are charming little comedies. They were all set to music by Monsigny, who, though a shallow musician, was able to produce pleasing and elegant airs in the style of the Italian burlettas. Philidor, the celebrated chess-player, was also a favorite composer in the same style and during the same period. He produced many pieces for the *Opéra Comique;* one of which, *Le Maréchal,* performed in 1760, had more than a hundred representations. Duni, Monsigny, and Philidor, may be looked upon as the founders of the French comic opera, which was supported by their compositions till they were thrown into the shade by the appearance of Gretry.

GRETRY was born at Liege in 1741. His father, who was a teacher of music, placed him, at six years old, in the choir of the cathedral, where he learned the rudiments of music, and afterwards received instructions from some of the masters of the place. When he was eighteen, he travelled on foot to Rome, and obtained admission into a seminary there, where he became the pupil of Casali, one of the most eminent teachers of the time. At Rome he pursued his studies for eight years, and composed some theatrical pieces which were performed with the applause of the public, and (what he valued still more) the approbation of Piccini.

Having finished his studies at Rome, Gretry repaired to Paris, in quest of fame and fortune. For two years he had to struggle with the difficulties to which a young and unfriended artist is exposed. Having, after many disappointments, obtained a poem to work upon, he composed the music; and the Prince of Conti, having heard it favourably spoken of, ordered a trial of it to take place at his house. Gretry copied all the parts himself, not being able to afford the expense of employing copyists. On the morning of the day of performance, he attended a rehearsal of the choruses. The singers were cold and sullen; they did not choose to take any trouble with the music of a raw lad from the country; and when he attempted to animate them by voice or gesture, they

only laughed in his face. In the evening a brilliant party assembled to judge of the music, which poor Gretry had the mortification to hear performed with apathy, and listened to with indifference. The prince spoke kindly to him when it was over, but gave him to understand that his music was not what he had been led to expect.

Gretry was on the point of leaving Paris in despair, when some men of letters, who had taken an interest in him, prevailed on Marmontel to write a piece for him. Marmontel accordingly wrote *Le Huron*, founded on Voltaire's well-known tale. The words and music were finished in six weeks. The Count de Creutz, the Swedish ambassador, who, notwithstanding Gretry's failure, patronised him warmly, and of whose benevolent and enthusiastic character Gretry, in his memoirs, gives many pleasing traits, had the composer, along with Cailleau, the celebrated singer, to dinner at his house. Gretry sang over his opera, and Cailleau, who had nearly declined to meet him, could hardly believe his ears when he heard such music from a man who had been described to him as destitute of merit. Cailleau introduced him to the other performers of the *Théâtre Italien*, at which theatre it was brought out in August 1768, admirably performed, and received by the public with enthusiasm.

Gretry gives an amusing account of the change which this one night made in his condition. "Next

morning," he says, "a friend called upon me, and asked me to go with him, as he had something to show me that would please me.—'Well, let us go,' said I, 'for I am tired already with hearing new pieces read to me this morning.'—'What, already?' —'To be sure—why I have already had the offer of five pieces which have been accepted at the theatre; and the poets who have honoured me with their visits are the very men whom I have so long been vainly beseeching to give me something.'— 'Ah!' said my friend, 'how I was amused last night while your opera was going on! I had a perfect crowd of these gentlemen about me; and at the end of every air, they were crying, *Ah! he shall do my piece—you shall see, gentlemen, what I shall give him!* If the air was a comic one; *Ah!* cried somebody, *I have comic airs in my piece too; bravo, bravo! he is my man!* But,' added my friend, 'have you agreed with any of these gentlemen?'—'O no; I have told them that Marmontel shall have the preference, as he was willing to take his chance with me.' My friend and I went out together; he took me to a little street behind the Italian theatre, where he showed me a snuff-shop which had got above the door 'The great Huron; N———, tobacconist.' I went in and bought a pound, which, of course, I found super-excellent."

Gretry's next opera was *Lucile*, also written by Marmontel. It appeared in January 1769, and had great success, though the piece was severely

criticised as being affected and unnatural. The character of the music strengthened an impression, which had been made by *Le Huron*, that Gretry, with all his genius, wanted gaiety ; and the journals laid it to his charge as matter of reproach, that he had made the audience cry at the comic opera. The subject of *Lucile* is very touching. Two young lovers are about to be married with the consent of their parents. On the wedding-day, the bride's foster-father makes his appearance, and reveals to her that she is not the daughter of her supposed parents, but had been substituted in her infancy for their child, who had died at nurse. The poor girl's distress and conduct, on a discovery which at once destroyed her happiness, excited much interest ; and the piece, notwithstanding the objections of the critics, enjoyed great and permanent favour. By his third piece, *Le Tableau Parlant*, a lively farce, written by Anseaume, which appeared in the autumn of the same year, Gretry vindicated his claim to the possession of *vis comica*.

Zémire et Azor, one of Gretry's most celebrated operas, appeared in December 1771. It was written by Marmontel, who took the subject from the well-known fairy tale of *Beauty and the Beast*. Its extraordinary success was at first owing to the admirable manner in which the character of *Azor* was represented by Clairval ; but its permanent favour arose from the romantic interest of the piece, and the charms of the music. It was not

only performed in every theatre in France, but adapted to the Italian, German, and English stage. Our English opera, *Selima and Azor*, is a version of this piece, with some beautiful music added by Linley. Gretry, from his Italian education, was looked upon with dislike by the partisans of the French school; and the success of *Zémire et Azor* excited the jealousy of the supporters of the grand opera. Rameau's *Castor et Pollux* was got up with great splendour, in express opposition to it, at the *Académie Royale de Musique*, and all the amateurs of the old school crowded to it, many people coming even from distant parts of the country.

Céphale et Procris, produced in 1774, was less successful than any of Gretry's previous operas. The subject is the well-known mythological tale, prettily and ingeniously treated by Marmontel, but with a good deal of his affected and artificial style. The scene in which *Cephalus* makes *Procris* a great many apologies for having committed the *gaucherie* of killing her, seemed laughable even to the Parisian audiences of that day. The following colloquy takes place between the dying nymph and her lover—*la politesse Française*, on both sides, "can no farther go."

" *Cephale.* Et tu meurs de ma main !
Procris. Je chéris encore cette main ;
Donne la moi.
Ceph. Non.

Proc. Donne, donne.
Ceph. Pardonne, hélas! pardonne
A l'erreur de ma main.
Proc. Tu m'aimais, je pardonne
A l'erreur de ta main."

It was at this period that Gluck, in consequence of circumstances which have been already mentioned,* arrived at Paris. He obtained the patronage of the young queen, the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, formerly his pupil at Vienna; and her whole influence was necessary to support him against the hostility of the musicians and amateurs of the French school, who used all the resources of cabal and intrigue to prevent his new opera from being heard. After six months spent in preparation, and in contending with obstacles, *Iphigénie en Aulide* was at length performed on the 19th of April 1774, by the express command of the queen. On the day which had been appointed for the first representation, Gluck was informed that the principal singer was suddenly taken ill, but that another would perform his part for that evening. Gluck, suspecting a new manœuvre, replied, that the piece must be postponed. This was declared to be impossible, as it had been positively announced to the public and the royal family. "I will sooner," Gluck declared, resolutely, "throw my opera in the fire than submit to its being murdered in the way you propose." All remonstrance was vain; and the royal family, being

* See *antè*, chapter viii.

appealed to, allowed the performance of Gluck's piece to be postponed.

The success of *Iphigénie* was triumphant, notwithstanding all the opposition it met with; and Gluck's triumph was still greater on the appearance, in the autumn of the same year, of *Orphée*—his *Orfeo* adapted to the French stage by M. de Molines. "The transport," says Grimm, writing at the time,* "with which this piece has been received, in spite of the old cabal of the partisans of Lulli and Rameau, proves the progress which this celebrated composer has already caused in the national taste: it proves that we need not despair of our ears, and that by dint of patience and genius the most *respectable* prejudices may be got rid of."

Gluck next brought out his *Alceste* in 1776, and *Armide* appeared in 1777. While he was engaged in this last work, Piccini arrived in Paris.†

By this time Gluck had overcome the opposition he had at first met with, and for more than three years had obtained undisputed possession of the French opera. The partisans of Rameau transferred their allegiance to him; and the principal reason, apparently, for their espousing the cause of his music, was, that as it was not Italian music, (for which their hatred was unabated,) it might be considered as akin to the French music which they used to extol. The bulk of the public attached

* *Correspondance*, August 1774. † See *antè*, p. 138.

themselves to this party, while the partisans of the Italian music were comparatively few. They, however, as well as their opponents, agreed in representing Gluck's music as being quite French, though less natural in its melody than Lulli's, and less pure in its style than Rameau's. It was thus for the same reason that the one party applauded Gluck, and the other abused him. The Italian party said that Gluck had sacrificed all the resources and all the beauties of his art to the single consideration of dramatic effect—a sacrifice, they added sarcastically, which was no doubt quite to the taste of a people who were insensible to the charms of melody, but had the nicest discernment in regard to theatrical propriety. Observe, they said, the conduct of a French audience at a new opera—their praise or censure is always directed to the style of the poem or the conduct of the plot, while the music is slightly attended to, and produces nothing but vague, common-place remarks, showing merely that they neither comprehend nor feel it. *Alceste* narrowly escaped condemnation the first night, owing to the awkwardness of the plot and the flatness of the catastrophe. It was a little improved in these respects, and immediately extolled to the skies. And this, exclaimed the Italian party—this is the love we bear to music in France !

The adherents of Gluck, on the other hand, defended themselves on the principles expressly

adopted by Gluck himself in the composition of his operas. They maintained that the music of an opera constituted, as well as its poetry, the language of the piece; and that, consequently, the one, as well as the other, ought to be subservient to dramatic truth and propriety. If pretty and well-sounding verses afford no excuse for a nonsensical subject and absurd or incoherent incidents, why should melodious music reconcile us to such absurdities? It is doing small honour, they argued, to the art of music, to consider it, as the Italians do, a mere physical luxury, a gratification to an organ of sense.

The violence of factious animosity, as usual, led both parties into extremes. Each exaggerated the opinions of their adversaries, fastening only upon their errors, without observing or admitting the truth with which they were mingled. It was no more true that Gluck had sacrificed the charms of melody to a rigid observance of theatrical effect, than that Pergolesi and Galuppi had thought of nothing but rendering their music agreeable to the ear.

Such were the disputes which agitated the musical world when Piccini arrived at Paris.

This great composer, then in the zenith of his fame, was eagerly patronised by the partisans of Italian music, and particularly by Marmontel, who not only supported him with all his influence, but offered to act as his poet and his instructor in the

French language, of which Piccini understood not a word. Marmontel modernised Quinault's beautiful opera of *Roland*, and then, with friendly zeal, set to work to teach Piccini to read and understand it. "Imagine," says Marmontel in his *Memoirs*, "the trouble I had in giving these lessons. Line by line, word by word, I had everything to explain; and when he had laid hold of the meaning of a passage, I recited it to him, marking the accent, the prosody, and the cadence of the verses. He listened eagerly; and I had the satisfaction to see that what he heard was carefully noted down. His delicate ear seized so readily the accent of the language and the measure of the poetry, that in his music he never mistook them. It was an inexpressible pleasure to me to see him practise before my eyes an art of which I had till then no idea. His harmony was in his mind. He wrote his air with the utmost rapidity; and when he had traced its design, he filled up all the parts of the score, distributing the traits of harmony and melody just as a skilful painter would distribute on his canvass the colours, lights, and shadows of his picture. When all this was done, he opened his harpsichord, which he had been using as his writing-table; and then I heard an air, a duet, a chorus, complete in all its parts, with a truth of expression, an intelligence, a unity of design, a magic in the harmony, which delighted both my ear and my feelings."

The rehearsals of *Roland* threw Piccini into de-

spair. The singers and the band could make nothing of the music, and were not even able to keep the time for a dozen bars together. During this confusion, Piccini sat in a corner in a state of utter dismay and helplessness, while Gluck, who kindly assumed the task of conductor, exerted himself to produce something like order. Marmontel, standing in great agitation at Piccini's elbow, kept constantly endeavouring to rouse him: "Now pray get up and show them the proper time of that movement—you see they have no notion of it." But Piccini merely shook his head, and ejaculated from time to time in his Italian French, "Ah! toutte va male, toutte." One day, in particular, when it was proposed that the parts should be rehearsed by the *doubles*, Marmontel, angrily declaring that his friend's opera should not be performed by *doubles*, snatched the part out of the hand of the young man who was to be the substitute for Le Gros. This was taken as a high affront by the whole body of *doubles;* and one of the chorus-singers protested with great emphasis that he, to be sure, had not the honour of being a double, but that if M. Marmontel had used such language to him, he should have waited for him at the door to chastise him for his impertinence. At last, after a world of pains, the performers began to see their way, and at last entered so much into the spirit of the composition, that it was performed to the author's entire satisfaction.

The music of *Roland* was severely criticised by the anti-Italian party. The Gluckists maintained that it was very pretty concert music, and nothing more; that it tickled the ear, but did not touch the heart; that it was calculated to please, but could never excite the enthusiasm, the emotion, produced by the sublime strains of *Alceste* and *Orpheus*. The feeble remnant who still stood up for the glory of the old French opera, exclaimed against the poet and musician who had laid their profane hands on the masterpieces of Quinault, and had attempted to sever the bond which united his name with that of the venerable Lulli. Where the energy and dramatic effect of some of the passages was undeniable, as in Roland's soliloquy in the third act, "Ah, j'attendrai longtemps, la nuit est loin encore," the adverse party consoled themselves by saying, that in these passages Piccini had imitated the French style; and the unconcerned part of the public crowded night after night to listen to music which their unbiassed judgment and taste told them was admirable and delightful.

Piccini's success gave strength and confidence to the Italian party, and the musical war raged more violently than ever. Pamphlets, lampoons, epigrams, articles in the journals, appeared in multitudes. The Abbé Arnaud, M. Suard, the Bailli du Rollet (the author of *Iphigénie)* headed the Gluck party, while Piccini's chief supporter among the literati was Marmontel. The violence of faction actually

broke up the ordinary intercourse of society. All other grounds of discord, even religious intolerance itself, were forgotten. The question no longer was, "Is he a Jansenist, a Molinist, an Encyclopedist, a philosopher, a good Catholic, a free-thinker?" one question only was thought of—"Is he a Gluckist—is he a Piccinist?" and on the answer to this momentous inquiry depended the peace of families, and the duration of intimate and long-established friendships.

It must be admitted, however, that (at least in the beginning of the contest) the partisans of Gluck were more violent and unreasonable than those of Piccini. Gluck himself (it must be mentioned with regret) had the bad taste to mingle in the fray. Two or three letters, with his signature, appeared in the journals, containing sarcasms against Piccini and his friends, which came from Gluck with a very bad grace, and would create an unfavourable impression of his character, were it not probable that his literary partisans made free with his name in giving vent to these spiteful effusions.

It does not appear that Piccini, who was a mild and good-natured man, ever took any personal share in these hostilities.

Marmontel wrote a pamphlet entitled, *Essai sur les Révolutions de la Musique en France*, in a tone of great moderation and good sense, which ought to have been an example to the other disputants. In the following passage he liberally did justice to the

merit of Gluck, and put the question in its proper light. "M. Gluck," he said, "has been well received in France, and deserved to be so. He has increased the rapidity, force, and energy of musical declamation; and, even in exaggerating its expression, he has at least saved it from one excess by an excess of a contrary kind. He has produced great effects by means of harmony; he has obliged our performers to keep time in singing; he has given the choruses a share in the action of the drama, and connected the ballet with the subject of the scene. His style, in short, is of a composite order, in which the German taste prevails, but which shows how the characters of the French opera may be accommodated to the Italian music Let us give him rivals worthy to equal him in the part in which he is distinguished, and to surpass him in the part in which he does not excel. Let him maintain his ground, if he can, by the strength of his orchestra and the vehemence of his declamation; let his competitors distinguish themselves by a style of music as impassioned as his, and more touching, and by a harmony as expressive, but more pure and transparent; and let the nation, after having deliberately balanced the character of both kinds of music and the effects they produce, form their own judgment respecting the pleasure they have derived from the one and the other."

For several years Gluck and Piccini continued to produce operas, while the war among their adherents went on without intermission. The success of their

works was pretty nearly balanced. Each was supported by a numerous party, and both were supported by that portion of the public who were disposed to enjoy good music, whether it came from Gluck or Piccini. Gluck produced *Armide*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, and *Narcisse*. The two first met with brilliant success; but *Narcisse* was coldly received. It was the last work of Gluck, who soon afterwards left France.

Piccini produced *Atys*, which was not less favourably received than *Roland;* and he then composed *Iphigénie en Tauride*, which, though bearing the same title, was a different drama from that which had been composed by Gluck. It was imprudent in Piccini to take a subject which had been already successfully treated by his rival.

Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* made a stronger and more general impression than any of his former operas. The poem was the first production of a young dramatist, M. Guillard, who followed the plan of the tragedy by M. de la Touche. The subject is simple and pathetic, the action rapid, and the effect very interesting. The music was not admitted by the Piccinists to possess melody; but it was so powerful and dramatic, that one of them (Baron de Grimm) said, "I don't know if this is singing; but perhaps it is something much better."* "When I hear *Iphigénie*," adds Grimm, "I forget

* A precisely similar compliment, we have been told, was paid by a great Italian *cantatrice* to Moore's singing, or rather musical recitation, of his own Irish ballads.

that I am at the opera ; I think I am listening to a Greek tragedy, with music composed by Le Kain and Mademoiselle Clairon."

Piccini's *Iphigénie en Tauride* was a bad *rifacimento* of De la Touche's tragedy. The Gluckists were very indignant at Piccini's presumption in taking this subject after it had been treated by the German composer. Piccini's music is beautiful, but it had indifferent success. On the second night Mademoiselle Laguerre, who performed the part of *Iphigénie*, appeared on the stage in such a state of elevation that she could not walk without staggering, and was held up by the attendant priestesses. This lady, who had risen from the *pavé*, and had afterwards contrived to ruin a prince of the blood and a wealthy farmer-general, was, nevertheless, a great favourite of the public, and, on this occasion, was treated with singular indulgence. The audience neither laughed nor hissed—suppressed murmurs only were heard in the *parterre*. In the interval between the first and second acts the fair heroine recovered herself, and went through the remainder of the piece with tolerable decency. She did not, however, entirely escape ; for the king, hearing of this exhibition, ordered her to the prison of Fort l'Evêque, where she remained two days, and was liberated on the intercession of some men of rank, and of Piccini himself. When her friends came to fetch her out of prison, she was, or pretended to be,

much ashamed, and repeated with great pathos the first two lines of her part—

> "O jour fatal, que je voulais en vain
> Ne pas compter parmi ceux de ma vie!"

On her re-appearance she was welcomed with acclamations loud and long, and sang more delightfully than ever.*

Gluck's departure from France did not put an end to the feuds between his partisans and those of Piccini. An amusing instance of the still subsisting party spirit occurred in 1781.

After the burning of the opera-house, the *Académie Royale de Musique* gave concerts twice a week in the Tuileries. At first they were well attended by both parties, till the Gluckists were driven away by an unlucky blunder made by themselves. The concert bills announced an Italian air by the Chevalier Gluck. When it came to be performed, all the Piccinists pretended to rise and leave the room, or gather in knots for the purpose of chatting round the fireplaces. The Gluckists, left masters of the field, listened with profound attention, and encored the air with shouts of applause. To their discomfiture, however, some good-natured Piccinist began

* Mademoiselle Laguerre died, in 1783, of the effects of dissipation, after a brilliant but profligate career of seven or eight years. Grimm, in his notice of her death at the time it happened, says she left one million eight hundred thousand livres, or seventy-five thousand pounds sterling!

to whisper among them that there had been a small mistake, the air not being Gluck's, but Jomelli's, and one, too, that had been hissed in Italy. The Piccinists triumphed unmercifully; and the mortified Gluckists returned no more to the concerts of the *Académie Royale de Musique*. They had, indeed, a ground of consolation, had they been aware of it; for Jomelli, though an Italian, imbibed the German style during his long residence in Germany; and it was because his latest and best compositions actually had a resemblance to those of Gluck, that they were applauded in Germany and hissed by his own countrymen.

During the period while Gluck and Piccini were composing for the French opera, its affairs flourished under the liberal administration of M. de Vismes. There were performed serious operas by Gluck, Piccini, and Rameau; Italian burlettas by Piccini, Sacchini, Anfossi, and Paesiello; and ballets got up with great splendour; and all these performances were well attended. The Italian music was much applauded, but the old French school still drew the greatest audiences. When *Castor et Pollux* was revived, it set aside, for a time, everything else. It was remarked that there was little applause; but the public made a point of showing their attachment to the good old French school, and the twentieth representation was as crowded as the first.

The prosperity of the opera under M. de Vismes

came to a sudden termination. In March 1779, a spirit of disaffection seized the whole *corps dramatique*, the result of which was a rebellion, still memorable in the annals of the French stage. Actors, singers, and dancers, all joined in the mutiny. Loud complaints were raised against the despotism of the manager, and nothing was heard behind the scenes but high-sounding demands of their rights, liberties, and independence. A *congress* was formed, (La Fayette was just returned from America,) and the illustrious Vestris, the "Diou de la danse," declared that he should be its Washington. This assembly evinced a determined spirit of resistance; and the patriots obtained the support of the Prince de Soubise, and other men of rank and influence. The manager was obliged to have recourse to the authority of government, in order to reduce the mutineers to obedience; but even official orders failed in their effect. "The minister orders me to dance," said Mademoiselle Guimard; "well—he had better look to himself, lest I make *him* dance [out of office, she meant] one of these days." This Mademoiselle Guimard had demanded a new and splendid dress for her part in *Castor et Pollux*, which the manager refused as a piece of unnecessary extravagance. The fair *danseuse* immediately sent him the dress she had, cut into a thousand pieces; and the manager had great difficulty in getting her to resume her part, after having given her the dress she demanded. Her amusing threat to turn out the

minister was talked of one evening at the king's *coucher*. "It is all your own fault, gentlemen," said the good-natured young sovereign; "if you paid these ladies fewer attentions, they would not be so insolent."

The great Vestris having given M. de Vismes a very insolent answer, that gentleman said wi thsome irritation, "Do you know to whom you speak, M. Vestris?"—"To whom I speak," said Vestris; "why, to the farmer of my talent." At last matters came to a crisis. The younger Vestris, for some gross act of rebellion, was arrested and sent to Fort l'Evêque. His parting from his father was sublime. "Go, my son," said the *Diou de la danse*, in the presence of all the performers assembled in the green-room to see the departure of this youthful victim of arbitrary power;—"go—this is the proudest day of your life. Take my carriage, and demand the apartment of my friend the king of Poland; I shall pay every expense."* The same night, Dauberval, another dancer, was sent to prison for some very seditious language. These

* This amusing trait brings to mind another of the same sort. When the younger Vestris made his debût, the *Diou de la danse*, in a magnificent and accurate court dress, with a sword at his side and his hat under his arm, advanced to the front of the stage, leading his son by the hand; and after having addressed the audience on the sublimity of his art, and the brilliant promise given by the august heir of his name, he turned with a majestic air to the young *debutant*, and said, "Now, my son, show the public your talent—your father beholds you!"

strong measures, however, only made matters worse. There were nothing but meetings, deliberations, remonstrances to the court, deputations to Versailles, and other proceedings of a similar kind ; while the business of the theatre was at a stand. The performers unanimously demanded their own dismission or that of the manager. A long negociation took place, conducted with all the forms of diplomacy, and in which the first persons in the state took part ; and its result was, that the supreme direction of the opera was committed to the *Prévôt des Marchands*, and M. de Vismes was, reduced to the situation of his deputy. During this period France suffered great political misfortunes—the loss of Pondicherry, the disastrous expedition to St. Lucie, and the destruction of her commerce by the enterprises of the English navy : but these things were looked upon with comparative indifference by the Parisians, whose minds were engrossed by a subject which came home more closely to their business and their bosoms—the great rebellion in the opera-house.*

The chief cause of this rebellion appears to have been the encouragement given by the manager to Italian music and Italian performances. And its effect was, that the government ordered the performance of Italian operas to be discontinued both

* The public found consolation for the loss of St. Lucie, as usual, in a joke. It was said that if ever M. d'Estaing received the baton of a marshal of France, it should not be made of 'bois de St. Lucie."

at the *Académie Royale de Musique*, and the *Comédie Italienne*, and all the Italian performers to be dismissed, to the regret of a portion of the Parisian public, but to the satisfaction of the great majority, who seem to have been more enamoured than ever of Rameau and Gluck; the German composer sharing their favour, because, having been accustomed to put him, as well as their countryman, in opposition to the Italians, they chose very absurdly to class Rameau and Gluck together, as belonging to the same school.

The quarrels between the Gluckists and Piccinists, at this time, had risen to the highest pitch. Some moderate men endeavoured to reconcile the contending parties, especially D'Alembert, and the Chevalier de Chastelleux, (an eminent critic,) who wrote an article with this view in the *Mercure*. But these endeavours had no effect. The missiles of pamphlets, lampoons, and epigrams flew thicker than ever. Marmontel having written a poem on this musical war, M. Suard sent him word, very civilly, that if he published it, he (Suard) would inflict upon him manual chastisement. This did not hinder Marmontel from reading it in all companies, but it does not appear that the promised drubbing was bestowed. The Gluck party, however, annoyed Marmontel with songs and squibs of various kinds. The following smart epigram by the Abbé Arnauld had great vogue among his party:—

" Ce Marmontel, si lent, si lourd,
Qui ne parle pas, mais qui beugle,
Juge la peinture en aveugle,
Et la musique comme un sourd.
Ce pédant à si sotte mine,
Et de ridicules bardé,
Dit qu'il a le secret des beaux vers de Racine ;—
Jamais secret ne fut si bien gardé."

CHAPTER XII.

Sacchini—Tribute by Piccini to Gluck's memory—Their rivalry and its consequences—Gretry's operas—D'Hele—Dalayrac—Gossec—Salieri — Beaumarchais — Mehul — Cherubini—Catel, Berton, and Le Sueur—Boieldieu—Hérold—Auber—Meyerbeer—Halévy—French singing.

Gluck had left Paris in 1779; but Piccini found a new rival in his celebrated countryman Sacchini, who arrived in 1781. They were old friends; and Sacchini came to France in consequence of the advice of Piccini, who exerted himself in his behalf, and rejoiced in his success, little suspecting that the Gluck party would set up Sacchini in opposition to him. Sacchini was immediately surrounded by a cabal, who persuaded him that Piccini was jealous of his success, and wished to depress him; and this produced an estrangement between them. A new sect arose, that of the Sacchinists, a sort of "mitigated Gluckists," (as a French writer calls them,) who resembled the Gluckists, however, chiefly in their jealousy of Piccini. The friendly intercourse of the composers, however, though inter-

rupted, was not broken off; and when Sacchini died in 1786, a memoir of him, by Piccini, appeared in the journals, containing a warm and affectionate tribute to his character, both as a musician and as a man.

Sacchini's *Rénaud*, or *Rinaldo*, was produced in the beginning of 1783, after every possible impediment had been thrown in its way by the intrigues of the opposite party, who would have succeeded in preventing its performance, had it not been for the special interference of the queen. It had complete success, to which the performance of Madame St. Huberti in the character of *Armide* greatly contributed. In the same year he produced his *Chimene*, the drama of which, founded on Corneille's *Cid*, was written by Guillard. Piccini, on the other hand, was equally active. He produced *Atys*, *Le Dormeur Eveillé*, and *Didon;* which last was his greatest triumph, and is generally considered his *chef d'œuvre*. It met with unanimous applause. Even the Gluckists were its most zealous partisans, because, they said, Piccini himself had become a Gluckist. There is no doubt this opera produced a greater dramatic effect than any of Piccini's previous works in the serious style; partly owing to the structure of the poem, (which was by Marmontel,) and partly to the superior variety, richness, and energy of the music. It was not, therefore, without some appearance of reason that the admirers of Gluck gave him credit for having caused an improvement in the style of Piccini. Madame

de St. Huberti was very great in the character of *Dido*. This lady was such a favourite of the public, that, one evening, at the *Théâtre Italien*, when she got up to leave her box, the audience rose and applauded her in the same manner as if she had been a royal personage. "If the public," says Grimm, who mentions this circumstance, "had known that, the very same day, Madame St. Huberti had reconciled Piccini and Sacchini, who had quarrelled we do not know why, their enthusiasm would have been still greater. The address, feeling, and grace which she has shown in reuniting these two illustrious rivals, do her as much honour, in the eyes of all who know her, as even her extraordinary talents."

Sacchini's greatest work, *Œdipe à Colonne*, was brought out in 1787, after his death. The drama was written by Guillard, and founded on Ducis' tragedy. This opera was received with enthusiasm, not only in France, but in Italy and Germany, in which last country it is still occasionally performed along with several other *chef d'œuvres* of the old school. A few years ago it was brought out with great splendour at Berlin, under the direction of Spontini. Sacchini's last opera, *Evelina*, was also produced after his death, but was not successful. The piece, the subject of which was taken from Mason's *Caractacus*, was pronounced heavy, though the music was admitted to be admirable.

On the death of Gluck in 1787, a noble tribute

to his memory by his great rival Piccini appeared in the Paris journals. Piccini proposed a subscription, not for the erection of a statue, but for the establishment of an annual concert to take place on the anniversary of Gluck's death, and to consist entirely of his compositions; "in order to transmit to posterity the spirit and the character of his works, that they may serve as a model to future artists of the true style of dramatic music."

The appearance of this article surprised both Piccini's partisans and those of Gluck. The former found themselves unwillingly obliged to believe, in opposition to all that they had so industriously written and printed, that Gluck, after all, might have been a man of genius, since Piccini himself frankly yielded him that title; while the Gluck party felt mortified that his most formidable rival had done him a much greater honour than they had been able to do, with all their clamorous support. The leaders of both parties—men who had been chiefly actuated by literary vanity or self-interest, affected not to know that these great men always did each other justice, even while those who presumed to criticise them denied to each of them the very merits by which he was peculiarly distinguished. Gluck always admired his rival's felicitous and charming melodies, the clearness of his style, the elegance and truth of his expression; while Piccini, with equal readiness, admitted that Gluck's new views of dramatic action, his manner

of intermingling the choruses with the dialogue of the principal personages, the rapid march of his scenes, and the power of his musical language in conveying sentiment and passion, had contributed greatly to the progress of the opera. Piccini said, and said truly, that the French lyrical stage owed as much to Gluck as French tragedy had done to Corneille; and it may well be supposed, that Gluck, had he been the survivor, would, with equal liberality, and equal truth, have said that the French lyrical stage had owed as much to Piccini as French tragedy to Racine. We may add in the words of a French critic, that "as the great Corneille was never more nobly eulogised than in the discourse delivered by Racine before the French academy, so it was from his competitor and rival Piccini that Gluck received the tribute which has done the greatest honour to his memory."

Though the favour which these great rivals enjoyed in their own day was equally divided, yet the works of the German composer have withstood the effects of time better than those of the Italian. The beautiful music of Piccini is now confined to the concert-room or the chamber, and rarely (too rarely) heard even there. But the operas of Gluck keep their places on the stage, both in France and Germany. Amid the profusion of ever-changing novelties, no old works can be *frequently* performed anywhere: but the *Orfeo*, the *Alceste*, the *Iphigénie en Aulide*, and the *Armide*, are, at intervals,

produced at Berlin, Dresden, &c., as well as at Paris. *Armide* was splendidly revived at Paris in 1826, and enthusiastically received by the audience. "The powerful choruses," says a Parisian journal of the day, "were executed with spirit and correctness, particularly that of the attendants of *Hate* in the first act, on which the energetic character of Gluck's sublime genius is so powerfully stamped. In justice to their taste, we must mention the marked homage which the public spontaneously rendered to the composer. The orchestra had scarcely finished the first bars of the symphony to the famous duet, "*Esprit de haine et de rage,*" in the incantation scene, when the loudest applauses rang through every part of the house." This opera was again revived in 1831, when it was judiciously curtailed from five acts to three. On this occasion the celebrated Nourrit produced a great effect by his action and singing in the part of *Rinaldo;* but the piece, on the whole, was somewhat coldly received; the long scenes in recitative, even though curtailed, having been found tedious.

The long warfare between the partisans of Gluck and those of Piccini, notwithstanding the absurd violence with which it was carried on, had a great and beneficial effect on the state of music in France. It was of a different character from the musical feuds which had taken place in England—between those, for instance, caused by the rivalry of Handel and Buononcini, of Faustina and Cuzzoni, or of Fari-

nelli and Senesino. These were the frivolous whims of people of fashion, without any aim or object beyond the gratification of vanity. The Gluck and Piccini parties numbered among their champions the most distinguished names in the literature and society of France. The dispute itself was based upon principles of dramatic and musical criticism, and carried on with a degree of wit, learning, eloquence, and critical acumen, which still give an interest to the controversy, though its subject has long since passed away ;—an interest, too, rather, heightened than otherwise by the extravagant vehemence of the disputants, their arrogant dogmatism, and self-satisfied ignorance of the practical details of the art. A contest so conducted necessarily attracted a large share of public attention ; and the powerful support and eloquent encomiums bestowed upon each description of music by its partisans, convinced the unbiassed part of the public that each was worthy of support and eulogy, as being possessed of its own peculiar beauties. Even during the heat of the controversy, the lovers of music flocked to hear the operas of Piccini as well as of Gluck. Each had the support of a great neutral body, as well as of his own partisans ; and when the violence of the dispute at length subsided, the French public were well able to appreciate and enjoy the excellencies of every school of dramatic music, and to give welcome and encouragement to those Italian and German composers who, from

that time to the present, have devoted their talents to the French lyrical stage.

While, in the serious opera, the suffrages of the public were divided among the works of Rameau, Gluck, Piccini, and Sacchini, all parties continued to be delighted with the comic operas of Gretry. Among his fifty pieces there are only two serious operas, or *tragedies*, neither of which was successful; *Céphale et Procris*, which has been already mentioned, and *Andromaque*, which was Racine's tragedy converted into an opera by a play-wright of the name of Pitra. The dramatist and composer attempted to make this piece grand and imposing, by stuffing it full of noisy choruses. There is a chorus in every scene; every dialogue and even soliloquy is delivered, and every incident takes place, in the presence of the multitude of confidential persons who fill the stage;—an absurdity which was ridiculed by the critics of that day, but now passes current on the Italian opera boards.

Gretry's operas appeared in regular succession from the year 1767 to 1791; and a few were produced at long intervals, down to the year 1797. His last opera was *Anacreon*, a work which had considerable success. He died in 1813.

Gretry has enjoyed a popularity in France, equally extensive and durable as that of Lulli or Rameau, and better merited. His principal operas are very charming productions. He was fortunate in having men of genius for poets, and his music

is melodious, spirited, and dramatic. His *Zémire et Azor* and *Richard Cœur de Lion* were successfully adapted to the English stage, and these, with several others, were translated into German, and, even within these few years, have been performed at different German theatres. In 1829, *Guilleaume Tell* was brought out at Paris with great care and splendour. Some alterations were made in the poem (which was originally written by Sédaine,) and M. Berton enriched the score by the addition of parts for wind instruments in the modern style. The piece was received with acclamations, and drew crowded audiences for many nights. The public, in their enthusiasm, called for the authors; a demand which could not well be complied with, as they had both been many years in their graves: but the bust of Gretry was brought upon the stage, attended by the principal performers, who crowned it with laurel, while three rounds of applause were given by the audience. Notwithstanding the success of this experiment, the constant influx of novelties seems to have prevented its repetition.*

Gretry's principal operas were written by Marmontel, Sédaine, and D'Hele. This last dramatist

* See (in the *Gazette Musicale* for February 1837) an article by Berlioz, a highly distinguished composer and critic, containing some excellent observations on *Richard Cœur de Lion*, and an appeal in behalf of the works of Gretry, thrown aside to make room for a multitude of paltry productions of the day.

was Thomas Hales, an Englishman, whose name was thus gallicised. He is much spoken of, and with great respect and kindness, in the literary memoirs of the day. He had resided for ten years in Paris, and was always in difficulties and distress, spending part of his life among the coffee-houses, and the remainder in the Fort l'Evêque. All that was known of his history was, that he was of Gloucestershire; had entered young into the English navy, and served in the West Indies; had afterwards travelled all over Europe, and lived a long time in Switzerland and Italy. His manners were those of an accomplished gentleman, and it was supposed that he had lost his patrimony by imprudence and extravagance. Even when in the most destitute condition, his demeanour was always dignified, and his habits regular; his whole deportment was that of a man of respectable birth and station. After his circumstances had been improved by his success as a dramatic writer, he became passionately enamoured of Madame Bianchi, a favourite performer of *soubrettes* at the *Théâtre Italien;* and so much was he engrossed by this attachment, that it estranged him from the society of all his friends. When the Italian company was suppressed, Madame Bianchi returned to Italy in spite of his endeavours to prevail on her to remain in France; and it was believed that his grief for this separation shortened his days. He died of consumption, a few months

after her departure, before he had reached the age of forty.* He wrote three of Gretry's operas, *Le Jugement de Midas*, *L'Amant Jaloux*, and *Les Evénemens Imprévus;* pieces not only of considerable dramatic merit, but remarkable for the spirit and purity of their style.

Gretry's most popular contemporary, as a composer of comic operas, was NICHOLAS DALAYRAC. He was of a noble family, and served in the *gardes du corps*. His admiration of Gretry induced him to study music, and attempt dramatic composition. He made his debût in 1782 by *L'Eclipse Totale*, a little burletta written by Chabaussierre, a fellow-guardsman. The subject is amusing;—an astronomer has a young girl for a ward, who elopes with her lover while the guardian is observing an eclipse, and the old gentleman tumbles into a well while running after the fugitives. The music of this lively trifle was found very pretty, and much applauded.

In 1786 Dalayrac produced his most celebrated opera,—*Nina, ou La Folle par Amour*. This piece, and several others on the same subject, are founded on a real incident.† A young girl of a village near Rouen was betrothed to a young sailor whom

* Gretry, in his *Mémoires*, gives an interesting account of this singular person.

† Paesiello's beautiful opera of *Nina* was produced after that of Dalayrac, and the Italian piece is closely copied from the French.

she loved, and who was to marry her on his return from a long voyage. The lover informed her of the day on which he was to arrive, and asked her to meet him at an inn a few miles from the village. She repaired to the place of meeting. After waiting a long time, she saw her lover's comrades make their appearance; she sprang to meet them, and at the moment when she expected to find herself in his arms, she was told he had perished the day before by an unhappy accident. She fell senseless to the ground; and, when she revived, her reason was gone. After that fatal day, the poor girl repaired daily to the same inn, desired a table to be covered for two, went to the spot where she had hoped to meet her lover, sat down on the ground and wept for a few minutes, re-entered the inn, and, after saying to the people of the house, with a sigh, "He will not be here to-day—I shall come back to-morrow," returned home without uttering a word.

M. Marsolier, the author of the drama, has given great effect to this little story. It was performed at the *Comédie Italienne*, and Mlle. Dugazon's pathetic representation of *Nina* dissolved the audience in tears. The music is pretty, simple, and expressive. The chorus while *Nina* sleeps, and the romance sung by her, are its most remarkable features.

Dalayrac's most successful operas, beside the above, are *Adolphe et Clara*, *Maison à vendre*,

Picaros et Diego, *Une heure de Mariage*, *Gulistan*, and *Camille*. He died in 1809.

Another contemporary of Gretry was Gossec, a greater musician, though not so popular a composer. He was born in Hainault about the year 1733, and, between the years 1766 and 1786, produced a number of successful operas, both for the *Académie de Musique* and the *Comédie Italienne;* the principal of which were *Le Faux Lord*, *Les Pécheurs*, *Toinon et Toinette*, *Sabinus*, and *Thésée*. All these are now forgotten; and it is upon his ecclesiastical music, which is of the highest order, that Gossec's permanent fame will rest.

This distinguished composer died in 1829, at the age of ninety-six. During his whole life he enjoyed high consideration both as a man and an artist. At the beginning of the French Revolution, he was made director of the band of the national guard, and composed the music of many of the patriotic songs and hymns of that period. When the *Conservatoire de Musique* was established in 1795, he was, jointly with Mehul and Cherubini, placed at the head of that great institution, in the management of which he took an active share until within a short time of his death. For the last three or four years of his life he lived, in comfortable retirement, in the village of Passy, enjoying the society of his friends and his favourite amusement of the opera. "All Paris," says a French memoir of him, "remembers the venerable com-

poser, bent beneath the weight of years, quitting his lodgings precisely at five, to repair to the *Théâtre Feydeau*. He always halted half way, at the *Café des Variétés;* and, after taking his coffee, resumed his course, and was to be found, immediately after the opening of the doors, in his accustomed corner of the pit. Like a veteran, he continued, to the last, faithful to the post of his early glories." A few months before his death, as he was on his way to his favourite place of amusement, he was seized with a sudden weakness, and fainted in the street. Some passers-by hastened to his assistance, and, upon his recovering his senses, inquired where he wished to be taken. His reply was, "To the *Opera Comique*." He appears to have been singularly free from narrow or selfish feelings. He lived to see a long train of composers rise in succession, from Gretry to Rossini, many of whom acquired a popularity greater than he had ever enjoyed ; but, in place of envying their celebrity, he admired them as artists, and regarded them as friends. And, in return, he was looked up to by all of them with sentiments of esteem and veneration, as the patriarch of the art, the Nestor of French musicians.

After Gluck's departure from Paris, he was engaged by the directors of the French opera to compose the music for a piece called *Les Danaides*. Gluck, now old and infirm, entrusted this task to Salieri, then a young man residing at Vienna, and

receiving his instructions. Salieri composed the opera according to the plan which Gluck had sketched out, and under his superintendence. Salieri went to Paris in 1784, and the piece was brought out as Gluck's, with the exception of the third act, which was said to have been completed by Salieri. It was received with the utmost applause, and the Parisian critics discovered in it all the beauties of Gluck's style. After its success was confirmed by several representations, Gluck, in an address to the French public, announced that Salieri was the sole composer of the opera. The public took the deception in good part, and *Les Danaides* was received with undiminished favour.

In 1787 Salieri composed the music to Beaumarchais' opera of *Tarare*. Beaumarchais had already produced an extraordinary impression by his celebrated comedies, *Le Barbier de Seville* and *Le Mariage de Figaro;* the latter of which, independently of its dramatic merit, was suited to the temper of the time by the boldness with which the author exposed the vices of the great and the abuses of the government. *Tarare* was equally in unison with the spirit of the age, its object being to exhibit the emptiness of artificial distinctions of rank, for which purpose the author places a reptile upon a throne, and draws his hero from the lowest class of the people. The moral is conveyed in the concluding lines of the piece :—

"Mortel, qui que tu sois, prince, Brame, ou soldat,
HOMME ! ta grandeur sur la terre
N'appartient point à ton état;
Elle est toute à ton caractère."

The appearance of this opera was long expected with intense interest. Beaumarchais had read it in private circles for three years; and when he found that public curiosity was fully excited, he refused invitations to read it from persons of the highest distinction. He accepted that of the Count d'Artois only on condition that several individuals of high rank, whom he had previously refused, should be admitted to the reading. Even the politics of that stirring time were forgotten for the moment, and less excitement was produced by the meetings of the Notables, and the daily changes in the ministry, than by Beaumarchais and his opera. At last it was performed, in June 1787, with extraordinary success, and continued for a long time to draw immense crowds; but it was remarked that these audiences consisted of a different class of people from the usual frequenters of the theatre; that there was little or no applause; and that the spectators listened in silence, and with an air of gravity quite unexampled in theatrical exhibitions. They received it, not as an entertainment, but as a political lecture—as a vindication of those "rights of man" to which their minds were now awakened; and it did its part, undoubtedly, in

accelerating a movement, the destructive rapidity of which was as yet foreseen by no one.

The story of this opera, which is interesting, is evidently founded in part on the well-known eastern tale of *Sadak and Kalasrade.* It was translated into Italian, and produced at Vienna under the title of *Axur Rè d'Ormus;* and such was the taste of the fashionable society of that capital, that it was preferred to the *Don Giovanni* and *Figaro* of Mozart. Salieri, notwithstanding the inferiority of his genius, stood higher than Mozart in the favour of the court and the aristocracy, and succeeded, by his intrigues, in preventing the man whom he presumed to rival, from obtaining the rewards and employments to which he was entitled. The music of *Tarare,* however, is possessed of considerable merit. This opera has long been a stock-piece in Germany, where it is still occasionally performed, both in its Italian and German dress. An English version of it was produced at our English opera-house in 1825, with some success. In this version the story is much altered, and nothing remains of the political spirit of the original.

Another of Gluck's disciples, but possessed of a higher order of genius than Salieri, was the celebrated Mehul. This great composer was a Belgian, and was born in 1763. After having pursued his musical studies with ardour, he went to Paris, at the age of sixteen, in 1779. Gluck's

Iphigénie en Tauride was then on the eve of representation, and the young stranger was carried by a friend to the general rehearsal of the piece. He listened with transport, and eagerly desired to witness the performance, which was to take place the following evening; but, being too poor to afford the price of admission, he determined to hide himself in one of the boxes, and there to wait for the time of representation. At the end of the rehearsal, however, he was discovered in his place of concealment by the servants of the theatre, who proceeded to turn him out very roughly. Gluck, who had not left the house, heard the noise, came to the spot, and found the young man, whose spirit was roused, resisting the indignity with which he was treated. Mehul, finding in whose presence he was, was ready to sink with confusion; but, in answer to Gluck's questions, told him that he was a young musical student from the country, whose anxiety to be present at the performance of the opera had led him into the commission of an impropriety. Gluck, as may be supposed, was delighted with a piece of enthusiasm so flattering to himself, and not only gave his young admirer a ticket of admission, but desired his acquaintance.

From that time Mehul became the friend and pupil of the veteran musician, under whose instructions he devoted himself to the study of dramatic composition. It was not till after ten years had elapsed that he came before the public as a

composer, his maiden opera, *Euphrosine et Coradin*, having been produced in 1790: but he had previously written three or four entire operas under the direction of Gluck, not with a view to performance, but solely for the sake of improvement. *Euphrosine et Coradin* had great success: and his next opera, *Stratonice*, which appeared two years afterwards, completely established his reputation. The French critics describe this work as being equally admirable in melody, orchestral accompaniment, and dramatic effect.

For several years afterwards, during the worst period of the Revolution, Mehul did not produce any work of consequence. In 1799 he brought out *Le Jeune Henri*, the overture to which is well known as an admirable piece of descriptive music. At this period some of the Parisian critics having maintained that Mehul was too dry and German in his style, he had recourse to a stratagem in order to repel this charge. He composed an opera called *Irato*, which was announced as a French drama adapted by him to the music of an Italian piece. It was favourably received, and the critics discovered how much the style of the music differed from Mehul's own; on which he declared himself the author. In his next opera, *Une Folie*, he also vindicated his claim to the character of a melodious composer;—to the great mortification (say his eulogists) of his splenetic critics.

But there must have been some foundation for

the strictures of these critics: for it is admitted that Mehul soon afterwards fell into the error with which they had charged him. Being a follower of the principles of Gluck, he appears to have carried these principles to excess, and, for a time, to have sacrificed musical beauty to the pursuit of dramatic effects. In 1806 he produced his opera of *Uthal*, in which he took it into his head to exclude the violins from the orchestra, supplying their place by the violas. This expedient, which, introduced for the sake of variety in a single air, might have a good effect, was insupportable when employed throughout the whole piece. Gretry, who was present at the first performance of this dull and melancholy music, whispered to the person next him, "I would give a louis to hear a cricket chirp just now." He composed several other operas, the success of which (notwithstanding their many beauties) was injured by the erroneous views he continued to entertain. His repeated failures seem to have induced him for a time to abandon dramatic composition; for it was after an interval of several years that he produced his *chef d'œuvre*, the opera of *Joseph*, which appeared in 1816; a work equally remarkable for the noble simplicity of its style, and the pathetic beauties of its melodies. *Joseph* has been repeatedly performed in this country, where (on account of its spiritual subject) it is given, not as an opera, but as an oratorio.

Mehul died in 1817, at the age of fifty-three.

He left an unfinished opera, *Valentine de Milan*, which was completed by another hand, and produced with great success. This opera, as well as *Joseph*, continues to be performed in Germany.

CHERUBINI, though an Italian, belongs to the annals of French music. He was born at Florence in 1760. After having acquired considerable reputation by his dramatic works in his own country, he settled at Paris, in the year 1786, at the age of six-and-twenty: and that city, notwithstanding a few short visits to Italy, Germany, and England, has been, ever since, his permanent residence. His first French opera was *Demophoon*, produced at the theatre of the grand opera (or Académie Royale de Musique) in 1788. The principal operas which he has since produced are, *Lodoiska*, *Elisa*, *Medée*, *L'Hotellerie Portugaise*, *Les Deux Journées*, *Anacréon*, *Faniska*, and *Les Abencerages*, the last of which appeared in 1813. The success of these operas, which combine the grace and delicacy of Italian melody with the strength and richness of German instrumentation, contributed greatly to the improvement of the French national taste; and several of them have obtained permanent possession of the stage in various parts of Germany. In England the admirable overtures to *Anacréon*, *Les Deux Journées*, *L'Hotellerie Portugaise*, and *Les Abencerages*, are in constant use at our concerts, and known to every amateur of instrumental music.

Notwithstanding, however, the excellence of Cherubini's dramatic works, it is in his sacred music that the greatness of his genius is most fully displayed. His numerous masses, motets, and other compositions for the church, entitle him to a place among the greatest ecclesiastical composers.

Cherubini's intellectual powers, and the dignity of his character, have contributed, as well as the excellence of his works, to the influence which he has long enjoyed in the French musical world; an influence of which the persevering malevolence of Bonaparte was unable to deprive him. Bonaparte had some love for the arts, and affected more. In the early part of his career, and even after he had achieved the rank of chief consul, he admitted several distinguished artists, and Cherubini among others, to a good deal of familiarity with him. One evening, during the performance of one of Cherubini's operas, Bonaparte, who was in the same box with the composer, said to him, "My dear Cherubini, you are certainly an excellent mucisian, but really your music is so noisy and complicated that I can make nothing of it."—"My dear General," answered the composer, "you are certainly an excellent soldier, but, in regard to music, you must excuse me if I don't think it necessary to adapt my compositions to your comprehension." Bonaparte, with the vindictive littleness which formed a part of his character, never forgave this spirited reply, and during his whole reign

withheld his favour from the offending musician. Many years afterwards, on a vacancy occurring in the post of *maestro di capella* to the emperor, Napoleon intimated to Mehul his intention of bestowing the office upon him. Mehul, between whom and Cherubini there subsisted a warm friendship, respectfully intimated his wish that he might be allowed to share the office with his distinguished brother composer. Napoleon, instead of appreciating the generous feeling which prompted this wish, took great offence at it; and saying haughtily, "I want a *maestro di capella* who will make music, and not noise," instantly appointed M. Le Sueur to the office.

Cherubini has been for many years director of the *Conservatoire de Musique*, an institution which mainly owes to his exertions its greatness and efficiency. At the age of seventy-eight he is still active and vigorous, performing his duties with zeal and assiduity, and taking an undiminished interest in everything that relates to the progress of his art. He has recently published an elaborate treatise on harmony and composition, a work of infinite value to the musical student.

Among the French composers who flourished at the beginning of the present century, Catel was one of the most distinguished. His principal opera is *Semiramis*, produced in 1803. His music is pure, elegant, and melodious. Along with him may be classed Berton and Le Sueur, who pos-

sessed similar merit, and a similar degree of reputation. The works of these composers are no longer performed.

Boieldieu, who was their contemporary, has obtained a much greater and more lasting popularity. He began to be known as a dramatic composer about the year 1800, when his reputation was established by *Le Calife de Bagdad*, an opera which is still a favourite with the French public. He has since produced a great number of operas, of which *Jean de Paris*, *Beniowski*, *Ma Tante Aurore*, *Le Petit Chaperon*, *La Dame Blanche*, and *Les Deux Nuits*, appear to be the most popular. He died in 1834, in the sixty-fourth year of his age.

Two of his operas, *Jean de Paris* and *La Dame Blanche*, have been successfully performed on the English stage. The latter is the best of Boieldieu's compositions. The drama, which is written by Scribe, is founded on Scott's *Monastery*, though the story is so altered, that little of the original remains but the names of some of the characters. Like the generality of Scribe's pieces, it is written with spirit, and well calculated for the production of musical effects. The music was composed in 1825, after an interval of many years, during which it was supposed that Boieldieu had retired from the field, and was no longer disposed to contend with younger aspirants to fame. But it appears that, during that period, he had not been inatten-

tive to the progress of music, and, in particular, to the increasing influence of the German school: for *La Dame Blanche* is characterised by a greater solidity of style, both in the concerted pieces and in the instrumental accompaniments, than is to be found in his previous operas.

HEROLD, a young composer of genius, whose career was closed by an untimely death, distinguished himself by two operas; *Marie*, produced in 1826, and *Zampa*, in 1831. The latter is a work of merit, and gained great popularity. The subject of the drama bears a close resemblance to that of *Don Giovanni*. The hero, *Zampa*, is a libertine, who, after a course of wickedness, is at last dragged to the infernal regions by the statue of a betrayed mistress, on whose marble finger he has, in a moment of levity and bravado, placed a ring. This catastrophe must have cost the composer no small difficulty to avoid coming into collision with Mozart; but he succeeded in treating the subject with considerable originality. *Zampa* appeared in an English dress at one of our theatres; but it was poorly got up and performed, and, consequently, had little success.

The principal composers of the present time who devote their talents to the French stage, are AUBER, MEYERBEER, and HALEVY.

Auber was first brought into notice in 1823 by his opera *La Neige*, which became very popular not only in France but in Germany, and is fre-

quently performed in the principal German theatres. His *Fra Diavolo*, and his most celebrated piece, *La Muette de Portici*, (or *Masaniello*,) are well known all over Europe. In Auber's earlier works there is a palpable imitation of Rossini; but he gradually acquired greater independence of style; and, in his later compositions, his manner, both in the cast of his melodies, and the disposition of his accompaniments, is decidedly his own. His peculiarities, indeed, are so marked, and so constantly perceptible, that they give his music too great a uniformity of character, and lay him open to the charge of mannerism. His music is not marked by depth of thought, or strength of feeling. His combinations are ingenious, but not profound; and his melodies, though often sweet and sometimes tender, are very rarely pathetic. But his music is brilliant, sparkling, exhilarating, and remarkable for the clearness and simplicity of its dramatic effects, even in scenes of the greatest bustle and confusion. These are the beauties which have rendered *Masaniello* so generally attractive. Every auditor, learned or unlearned, is animated and delighted by the charming *barcarole*, the market chorus, the chorus of fishermen, the beautiful finale to the third act, (in the original piece,) the bacchanalian song, and the air sung by Masaniello. Beauties of a similar kind, though inferior in degree, are to be found in *Fra Diavolo*. Among Auber's minor productions, a comic opera

called *Le Philtre*, written by Scribe, and brought out at the *Académie Royale* in 1831, is probably the most agreeable.

Meyerbeer, the son of a banker of Berlin, was born in 1794. His first musical studies were conducted by the Abbé Vogler, who filled his head with the rules of the old school; the consequence of which was, that when he produced an opera at Vienna, the dryness of its style caused a complete failure. By the advice of Salieri he visited Italy, and became a convert to the style of that country. He remained in Italy for several years, and brought out several operas at Padua, Venice, and Milan, with distinguished success. The principal of these were *Margherita d'Anjou*, and *Il Crociato in Egitto*. Notwithstanding his success in Italy, Meyerbeer's change of style did not please the German critics. His friend and fellow-student Weber, in particular, in several of his letters, grievously lamented Meyerbeer's backsliding, and remonstrated with him on the subject; but still, notwithstanding his objections to the style of his friend's operas, he had them carefully performed at the Dresden theatre, of which he was then the musical director.

Il Crociato, which was first performed at Venice in 1825, raised the composer's reputation to the highest pitch, and rivalled, in the greatness and extent of its popularity, the most successful operas of Rossini. The universal opinion was, that, in this

fine opera, Meyerbeer had effected a happy amalgamation of the German with the Italian style; that he had combined the graceful, smooth, and flowing melody of Italy with the severer beauties of the German school; that his vocal passages were as expressive and impassioned as his instrumentation was striking and descriptive; and that the whole piece was marked by dramatic propriety and truth. The composer was fortunate in the choice of his poem, which is by Signor Rossi, a modern Italian dramatist of considerable talent. It is an interesting tale, in which European chivalry and eastern romance are blended with much effect; there is force as well as elegance in the dialogue; and the songs possess no small share of poetical beauty.* *Il Crociato* was brought out at our English opera-house in July 1825 (a season when that theatre was under the able management of Mr. Ayrton) with a strong cast and great care in every particular, and received with a degree of applause amounting to enthusiasm. It was soon afterwards brought out at Paris under the direction of the composer himself, who received an invitation from M. de la Rochefoucauld to visit the French capital for that purpose. It was stated in the French journals at the time, that Rossini, then manager of the Italian opera, was about to bring forward this piece in a

* See, in particular, the graceful romance, "Giovinetto Cavalier," the poetry of which is as elegant as the music.

manner which would have endangered its success, but was prevented by the interposition of a higher authority.

This visit to Paris, and his reception there, appear to have induced Meyerbeer to make that city his permanent residence, and to turn his attention to the French opera. His marriage in 1827, and the successive loss of two infant children, suspended for a time his musical pursuits. His first opera for the French stage, *Robert le Diable*, was performed at the *Académie Royale de Musique* in 1831. It was got up with extraordinary splendour, and received with an enthusiasm which has rarely been surpassed. For several successive seasons the public crowded nightly to see it; and, even to this day, the frequency of its performance shows that its attraction is not greatly diminished.

In the season of 1832 *Robert le Diable* was performed, in its original form, at the King's Theatre in London, then under the management of Mr. Monck Mason, whose zeal and spirit merited greater success than he met with. He not only engaged the composer himself to superintend, in person, the preparation of the piece, and to conduct its performance, but he imported nearly the whole *dramatis personæ*, and the costly decorations, costumes, and properties of the Parisian theatre. His object was to transport, for the time, the grand opera of Paris into the Haymarket; but he failed in the accomplishment of this spirited attempt.

Delays and impediments occurred in the preparation of the opera, and Meyerbeer departed before it was ready for performance. It was not brought out till the middle of June, and even then, though it was splendidly got up and admirably represented, the performance bore marks of imperfect preparation. It was received at first with expressions of great applause; but the public were wearied by the excessive length of an opera in five acts,—a thing wholly unprecedented in England. From these and other causes, its production was, on the whole, a failure, and made a heavy addition to the ruinous losses of the season.*

The drama of *Robert le Diable*, which is by Messrs. Scribe and Delavigne, making allowance for the wildness and extravagance of the subject, has considerable poetical merit. In the music, which is original and powerful, Meyerbeer has forsaken his Italian style. The melodies have a good deal of the French national character; and the harmonies, both vocal and instrumental, have the

* The production of *Robert le Diable* at the opera-house was forestalled by the two great winter theatres, the managers of which, though not possessed of Meyerbeer's score, contrived, each of them, to bring out a spurious piece bearing his name, but vamped up by English composers employed for that purpose, from the piano-forte arrangement which had been published at Paris; - a most reprehensible proceeding, as it was known that Mr. Mason had paid the composer a large sum for a copy of the score, and the exclusive right of performing it in London.

depth and fulness (frequently carried to excess) of the German school. The powers of the brass instruments of the orchestra are so unsparingly used, as, in the course of so long a piece, to fatigue and oppress the ear.

Les Huguenots, the last of Meyerbeer's productions, was first performed at the grand opera in February 1836, and has had an almost incessant run ever since. The drama, by Scribe, is founded on the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the horrors of which are strongly represented. This piece is an instance of the change in the French taste in regard to spectacles of bloodshed and horror. These were formerly excluded, and their frequent occurrence on the English stage was a fruitful theme of censure and ridicule to the French critics: but the modern French public appear now to have a morbid appetite for horrid and revolting theatrical exhibitions. This opera terminates with the massacre, in the presence of the audience, of the chief protestant persons of the drama, who are shot by the furious Catholic soldiers, and their bodies left in a heap on the stage, while the murderers depart in search of fresh victims, singing in chorus, by way of finale,—

> "Frappons, poursuivons l'hérétique ;
> Dieu le veut, Dieu veut leur sang !"

This opera presents another feature, now common on the French stage; the indecorous introduction of prayers, hymns, and the most solemn rites and ceremonies of religion. One of the means of dra-

matic effect is the frequent repetition of one of Luther's psalms: and a hymn to the Virgin, sung by a choir of young girls, in a religious procession, is blended with the profane accents of a jovial ditty, in praise of women, wine, and plunder, roared by a party of drunken Calvinists. These circumstances are a bar to the performance of *Les Huguenots* on the English stage; and it is owing to them, doubtless, that no attempt of the kind has been made; for, in other respects, this opera could be clothed in an English dress as easily as *Robert le Diable*. Its music, like that of its precursor, is full of powerful effects, but fatiguing to the ear from the almost incessant force of the accompaniments during five long acts; and the great quantity of *religious* music (as it is called) appears very heavy, except to Frenchmen, who seem to have a greater relish for this description of music in the theatre than in the place where it is most appropriate.

The same vitiated taste for the horrible and the revolting, and the same propensity to profane the most sacred things, now so prevalent on the French stage, are exemplified in two of the most popular operas of the day, *La Juive*, and *La Tentation*, both composed by HALEVY, a musician of talent. The former of these pieces, shorn of some of its most disgusting features, and, in particular of its insufferable catastrophe (which consists in the heroine being plunged alive into a boiling caldron,) was lately got up at Drury Lane with great splendour

and some degree of success, though it was found to be still too highly seasoned with horrors for an English palate. As to the latter, its daring impiety has no parallel since the days of the *Mysteries;* while it has not the excuse which may be made for them, of being the production of a semi-barbarous age.

La Tentation is founded on the Catholic legend of the Temptations of St. Anthony. In the outset a hermit appears in his cell, murmuring at the austerities of his solitary life. A storm rises, and a female pilgrim, half dead from cold and wet, begs for shelter in his cell. He gives her wine to restore her, and, to encourage her, partakes of the cup he offers. Under the influence of wine and beauty, the monk, whose previous repinings show him to be an excellent subject for the devil to work upon, forgets his sanctity so far as to offer violence to his guest, regardless of the image of the Virgin under which she has sought protection, when he is struck dead by a thunderbolt. A troop of angels, headed by the archangel Michael, rush in at one side, and a troop of devils, headed by Belial, at the other. They contend for possession of the hermit's soul; but the dispute is compromised by an agreement that he shall be restored to life in order to undergo three more temptations, on the result of which shall depend his final doom. The hermit awakes as from a swoon, and believes all that has passed to have been a dream; till, seeing the beautiful pilgrim

still lying senseless on the floor, he rushes out of his cell, to avoid further danger from her charms. The scene now changes to hell, where Ashtaroth and his legions of inferior spirits are sitting in conclave on the case of the hermit. They resolve to tempt him by means of female beauty, and set about manufacturing a temptress by the help of diabolical incantations. A cat, a magpie, a peacock, a goat, a viper, a monkey, and some other animals, (very gallantly chosen as emblems of womankind,) are thrown into a flaming caldron, and the hell-broth is made "thick and slab" by the infusion of blood and tears. The charm at first fails—instead of a beautiful woman, there rises from a caldron a monster of an aspect so horrible as to frighten the devils themselves. This abortion is thrown back into the caldron: by way of mending the charm, a devil more knowing than his fellows adds to the ingredients jewels, shawls, and other articles of female finery; and the wished-for production appears in the form of a most beautiful and graceful woman, represented to the life by the celebrated Mademoiselle Duvernay. In a chorus of demoniacal joy, the fiends give their new creation the name of Miranda, and depart with her in search of their intended victim. The scene of the third act is a gothic castle, occupied by the demons in the guise of a feudal baron and his servants and retainers. The hermit, now an outcast, and exhausted with cold, hunger, and fatigue, begs for

shelter at the gate, but is refused admittance, unless on condition of his destroying a crucifix. He rejects the proposal, and is left exposed to the storm, while the windows blaze with lights, and joyous songs announce the revelry within. Miranda issues from the castle, and endeavours, by her persuasions and blandishments, to induce him to renounce his vows; but he remains firm, and she is retiring, when her steps are arrested by the choral hymns of a company of pilgrims. She listens; and, moved by their pious accents, falls on her knees, and endeavours to join in their prayers; then, hastening to the castle, returns with provisions, which she places before the hermit and the pilgrims. The devils, enraged at the treachery of their slave, rush out, and are about to maltreat her, when the pilgrims are suddenly transformed into a company of angels, who spread their wings around the hermit, while the castle vanishes, and the demons fly from their presence. The hermit, in the fourth act, is transported into the harem of an eastern sovereign, where he undergoes fresh temptations and dangers, from which he is saved by Miranda, who, in place of his tempter, becomes his protectress. The last act presents a *tableau* in action, copied from the celebrated engraving of Callot. The demons strive, by means of terror, to overcome the firmness of the hermit, but in vain: at length the celestial host, led by Michael, descend to his protection; a conflict takes place, which ends in

the defeat of the army of hell, and the holy man is borne away to heaven amid the choral songs of the conquerors.

The painful impression which such a representation is calculated to make on English feelings is increased by the irreverent parodies of the prayers and hymns of the church, which occur in almost every scene. There is, it must be admitted, much beauty in the music : some of the choruses, in parcular, exhibit the hand of a master. The splendour of the spectacle, as got up at Paris, is unparalleled, the scenic illusion almost magical, and some of the situations powerful and impressive. And yet, with all its beauty, splendour, dramatic effect, and varied attractions, we are well assured that, were such a jumble of horrors, profanity, and voluptuousness, exhibited before an English audience, it would never receive a second representation.

It remains to add a few words respecting the French school of singing. Till within a recent period, the badness of French singing has been constantly remarked by all (except the French themselves) who have had occasion to speak of the music of that country. Rousseau, in his celebrated *Lettre sur la Musique Française*, and, indeed, in all his musical writings, speaks of the French singing with unmeasured ridicule and contempt, characterising the voices as harsh and screaming, the style as vicious, and the expression as affected and unnatural. Burney, describing the music which

he heard in Paris in 1770,* makes several remarks to a similar effect. "In the evening," he says, "I heard two musical dramas at the *Théâtre Italien*, in which the singing was the worst part of the performance. Though the modern French composers hazard every effect that has been tried by the Italians, yet, from being ill executed and ill understood, it seldom makes an impression upon the audience."—On another occasion he says, "Several of the songs would have been admirable, if they had been sung with the Italian expression. But the French voice never comes further than from the throat; there is no *voce di petto*, no true *portamento*, or direction of the voice, on any of the stages." He says at a later period,† "A singing-school is now established at Paris, with Piccini for principal master: but if his assistants are not Italians, and the music upon which they form the voice is not Italian, and set to Italian words, it may be safely predicted that many ages will elapse before any scholars will be produced that foreigners will hear with pleasure; and that the period is still more distant when the national taste in singing will be so meliorated by their performance as to escape censure from the rest of Europe."

Since that period, however, the French style of singing has improved with as much rapidity as the other branches of the art. Even at that time, singers began to imbibe the purity and grace of the

* *Present State of Music in France and Italy.*

† *History of Music*, vol. iv. published in 1789.

Italian style. The celebrated Garat, one of the greatest vocalists that France has produced, attracted notice so early as 1784. He was the son of an advocate of Bordeaux, and delighted the fashionable world by his wonderful talents as an amateur. He was then about twenty, and did not know a note of music, but sang with surprising execution and exquisite taste. Piccini and Sacchini, who were charmed with his singing, advised him to abstain from the study of rules from which nature seemed to have given him a dispensation. He was able to sing a whole opera, from the overture to the finale, inclusive, giving all the *obbligato* passages of accompaniment and other instrumental effects, and not even omitting the *airs de ballet;* and all this he did as easily as another would sing an air. He afterwards embraced music as a profession, and was for many years the greatest tenor-singer in France. His contemporary, Chardin, also a tenor-singer, was equally distinguished for purity of style. Lais, who, at the beginning of the present century, was not less eminent as a church than as a theatrical singer, was considered equal to the celebrated Italian singer David in style and expression; and Elleviou, who flourished somewhat later, was possessed of similar qualities.

These singers have obtained a place in musical history from the possession of qualities, which, in their day, were rare among their countrymen.

But the familiarity with the best models, the excellent system of education in the *Conservatoire*, and the improved taste of the public, have gradually eradicated the vices of the French school; and the favourite vocalists of the present time, among whom may be enumerated Nourrit, Levasseur, Duprez, Madame Cinti Damoreau, Mademoiselle Falcon, and Madame Dorus Gras, are pure and elegant singers, as well as excellent dramatic performers.

CHAPTER XIII.

Italian opera to the present time—London opera-house—Winter's operas — Mrs. Billington — Madame Grassini—Mr. Braham—Madame Catalani—Introduction of Mozart's operas —Bertinotti — Tramezzani and Naldi—Vestris — Fodor — Remarkable season of 1817 — Camporese —, Ambrogetti— Rossini.

In the brief view which it remains for us to take of the progress of the Italian opera since the beginning of the present century, we shall adopt, as the most convenient, the method of giving some account of the transactions of the London Italian opera-house, in so far as regards the pieces which have been successively produced, and the performers who have appeared at that theatre. The principal works of every eminent composer who has flourished during the above period have been brought forward in London; and every performer who has acquired distinction abroad has aspired to the favour of the English public.

At the beginning of this period the principal operas performed were those of Cimarosa, Paesi-

ello, Guglielmi, Gluck, Salieri, Bianchi, and other composers of that day, who have been already mentioned. The year 1803 was rendered remarkable by the arrival of WINTER, and the performance of his *Calypso*. Winter, on the death of Mozart, had been left without a rival in Germany, and, when he came to England, was the most eminent composer of the time, for the Italian as well as the German stage.

WINTER was born at Manheim about the year 1755. He became, at an early age, *maestro di capella* to the Elector of Bavaria, after having distinguished himself by many excellent compositions. He went to Italy, and composed several operas for the theatres of Venice and Naples; after which he fixed his residence at Munich. He produced a great number of German operas for different theatres, among which the *Unterbrochene Opferfest*, (The Interrupted Sacrifice,) first performed at Vienna, has been generally considered the most excellent. In 1802, while on a visit to Paris, he produced his French opera of *Tamerlan;* and it was immediately after the successful performance of that piece that he came to London. He remained in England till the end of 1804; during which period he composed, for our King's Theatre, the opera of *Calypso* already mentioned, *Zaira, Proserpina*, and *Castore e Polluce.*

The season of 1804 was one of the most splendid in the annals of our Italian opera. It was memo-

rable, not only for the production of the *chefs d'œuvres* of Winter, but for the simultaneous appearance of Billington, Grassini, and Braham.

Mrs. Billington had returned to England in 1801, in the zenith of the fame she had acquired during her residence in Italy.* She had lost her husband, who had died suddenly at Naples; and she had soon afterwards married a Frenchman of the name of Felissent, retaining, however, the name of Billington. On her return, she betook herself to the English stage, and astonished as well as delighted the public by her performance of her old characters, *Mandane*, *Rosetta*, *Clarissa*, &c. On the departure of Banti, at the end of the season of 1802, Mrs. Billington was engaged at the Italian opera. She was at this time about thirty; and her personal charms, still great, were impaired by a degree of *enbonpoint* which deprived her action, too, of the elegance and grace which had formerly distinguished it. Her features were beautiful; but her countenance, though full of good humour, was incapable of varied expression, and she had no talents whatever as an actress, the effects she produced on the stage being attributable entirely to her vocal powers. Her voice was a pure soprano, not remarkable for volume, but very sweet and flexible, and of extraordinary compass in its upper extremity. Her rapidity was amazing, and nothing could exceed the finish and delicacy of her execu-

* See *antè*, p. 185.

tion. She was, too, a thorough musician, having been in her youth a great performer on the pianoforte; and her knowledge of the art furnished her with an inexhaustible variety of beautiful embellishments. So much were the public struck by the novelty and singular beauty of her vocal graces and ornaments, that her favourite songs were published as nearly as possible in the way she sang them, her *fiorituri* being taken down, as she gave them, by the most experienced musical professors.

Of the date of Madame GRASSINI's birth we do not find any record. She was *prima donna* of the opera at Venice in the year 1797; and in 1800 was invited to Paris by Bonaparte, who had heard her with great admiration during his Italian expedition. Lord Mount Edgecumbe says, that her voice, which was originally a high soprano, had by some accident been reduced to a low and confined contralto. It was, indeed, a contralto of very limited extent; but, within its proper compass, it was of so perfect a quality, and of such volume and power, that it is not easy to believe that it could have been merely the wreck of a voice of a quite different register. She was strikingly beautiful. Her figure was tall and commanding; and her gait and attitudes had the exquisite grace of the finest models of Grecian statuary. Her head was noble; her features of the most classical beauty of form; her hair and eyes of the deepest black;

and her whole appearance had an air of singular majesty and greatness. She was a highly accomplished musician, and her talents as an actress were very considerable.

Notwithstanding these gifts of nature and art, Grassini was not at first popular in England. The female contralto voice, though now well known and highly appreciated, was not at that time familiar to our audiences, who missed the clear and brilliant sounds, the flexibility of organ, the rapid passages and florid embellishments which they conceived essential to female singing. She first appeared in *La Vergine del Sole*, an opera by Mayer; but, though her beauty and her acting were much admired, her success as a vocalist was by no means decisive. Her reception, indeed, was so equivocal, that, when her benefit was to take place, she feared to venture it alone, but applied to Mrs. Billington for her assistance. On this occasion Winter's *Proserpina* was performed for the first time, Ceres being represented by Billington, and Proserpine by Grassini. The music of each of the parts was adapted with consummate skill to the different powers of the performers; and Grassini, if she did not carry away the palm from her rival, at least divided it with her. Her plaintive accents in the little simple air, "Paga fui," in which Proserpine mourns her happy days of childhood spent by her mother's side, subdued and melted every heart, and its impression was evinced by the tears,

even more than the applause, of the audience. For this, and the two following seasons—as long as Billington and Grassini remained upon the stage —this opera drew crowds to the theatre; and the airs of these singers were to be found on the pianoforte of every lady who numbered among her accomplishments a knowledge of Italian music.

In Winter's *Castore e Polluce*, BRAHAM performed along with Mrs. Billington. He had already appeared on our Italian stage in the year 1796, when he was only nineteen; and had afterwards acquired, in Italy itself, the reputation of a great Italian singer. He had previously made a most brilliant debût, not only on the English stage, but at the oratorios, where he had, even at that early age, given proof of his transcendent talent, by the unrivalled expression with which he delivered the famous soliloquy of *Jephtha*, "Deeper and deeper still," which to this day remains the greatest of his efforts. The road to fame and fortune was now open before him; but he wisely considered that his great object, in the first place, ought to be to render himself a thoroughly accomplished artist. Declining, therefore, the most tempting pecuniary offers, he set out for Italy, in which country he remained for four years; and, during this period, he not only applied himself assiduously to the study of his art, but appeared at the principal theatres with great distinction. During the Carnival season of 1799, he was engaged to sing at

the *Scala* theatre of Milan, along with Mrs. Billington; and they were to appear together in an opera by Nasolini, a composer who then enjoyed some reputation. The applause which Braham received during the rehearsals, excited the jealousy of Billington, or rather of her husband, M. Felissent, for jealousy formed no part of her character. The intriguing Frenchman contrived to procure the omission, on the first representation, of a grand *aria* for the tenor voice, in which Braham's powers were advantageously displayed. The affair, however, had been talked of, and the public did justice to Braham by giving strong marks of disapprobation. Next day it was announced in the bills that Braham's scena should be performed, and, on the second night, the piece was received with the utmost applause. Mrs. Billington's concern in this matter, and her conduct in some other respects, had given Braham cause of umbrage; and he resolved on a kind of revenge which probably nobody but himself could have taken. Mrs. Billington's beautiful embellishments were always elaborately prepared and studied beforehand; and, when once fixed on, seldom changed. Braham, whose first great air in the opera preceded that of Mrs. Billington, listened to her roulades at the rehearsals, acquired them perfectly, and at the first representation, introduced into his own air every one of the well-studied graces that the lady had thus prepared for her own. Billington, thus plun-

dered of her property, had very little to substitute for it, and astonished the audience by the unaccustomed meagreness of her style. The husband blustered and threatened, and Mrs. Billington refused, in the next opera, to sing a duet with Braham. But her good nature got the better of her spleen, and the two great English singers became, and always continued, very good friends. It was at this time that the elder David, the greatest Italian singer of his time, exclaimed on hearing Braham, "There are only two singers in the world, I and the Englishman!" At Venice, Braham was one of the performers in Cimarosa's unfinished opera of *Artemisia*, which being completed by Mayer, and brought out after the author's death, was stopped by the audience before the conclusion, as they did not choose that any other music should be mingled with that of their lamented composer.

On Braham's return to this country in 1801, he devoted himself chiefly to the English stage. His only appearances at the Italian opera were during the seasons of 1804, 1805, and 1806; and, for a short time in the season of 1816. The three brilliant seasons just mentioned were distinguished by the performance of the beautiful operas of Winter, and some of the masterpieces of Cimarosa; and the last of them (1806) was rendered still more remarkable by the first introduction into England of the music of Mozart—the *Clemenza di Tito* having been chosen by Mrs. Billington for her

benefit. It was said that this occurrence was owing to the taste and knowledge of his late majesty, George IV., (then prince of Wales,) who not only suggested the choice, but supplied the score of the opera from his own library. The experiment, however, was made too early. The characters of *Vitéllia* and *Sesto* were finely performed by Billington and Braham; but the Italian part of the company neither relished nor understood the music and found the study of one of Mozart's concerted pieces a more laborious task than that of half a dozen whole operas of the Italian school. Nor did it appear that the audiences of that day were more enlightened than those performers; so, after a few repetitions, this noble opera was laid aside to make way for some of the established favourites of the day, and Mozart remained as unknown at the king's theatre as ever.

At the close of the season 1806, Madame Grassini quitted England, Mrs. Billington retired from the stage, and Braham withdrew from the opera-house. With them, good music and good performance disappeared also; and this brief but memorable time was succeeded by a long period of barrenness and insipidity,—a period which we have no hesitation in thus designating, though it was then that Catalani was in the meridian of her course, and the full effulgence of her splendour. Her splendour, unhappily, while it extinguished every other light, threw no radiance around, and only

thickened the darkness which covered our Italian stage.

Angelica Catalani was a native of the Roman territory, and born in 1780. She appeared at an early age as a theatrical singer, at Venice, Florence, Rome, and other places in Italy. She afterwards went to Lisbon and Madrid; and, while in the Peninsula, was married to M. Valabreque, an officer in the army of Junot. Her fame soon reached England, and produced an engagement at the King's Theatre, where she made her first appearance in December 1806, in the character of *Semiramide*, in an opera of that name, composed for her by Portogallo, a composer whose music she brought into temporary vogue, but who is now deservedly forgotten.

It is not wonderful that the public were captivated by Catalani. She was in the bloom of her surpassing beauty, and her vocal powers had reached full maturity. Her form was a model of symmetry, and her face, which beamed with intelligence and animation, was capable of every shade and variety of expression. The natural gifts of her mind were not unworthy of those of her person. She possessed energy and spirit, blended with great sensibility, sweetness of temper, and warm affections. These qualities gave an irresistible charm to her manners; and it was impossible to be in her society without being fascinated by her unaffected good humour, and exuberant yet per-

fectly delicate vivacity. The general admiration, too, which she inspired, was heightened by her domestic habits, simplicity of character, and uniform purity and propriety of conduct. Where blame was incurred in consequence of the transactions to which she was nominally a party, it was very well known that no part of it attached to her. She was almost entirely uneducated, even in music; a misfortune which prevented her from attaining that height, as an actress and a singer, which her singular gifts of nature ought to have placed within her reach.*

* Of the generosity of Madame Catalani's disposition many instances are remembered. When she performed for the benefit of musicians, she frequently returned the whole or a large portion of the sum for which she was engaged; and she often acted in the same manner towards public charities. When a great musical performance took place for the benefit of the Westminster hospital, in 1821, she was solicited to contribute her services, but declined on the ground that her own concerts, then announced, might be injured by her previous appearance elsewhere. But, on the day after her first concert, she transmitted to the committee the whole proceeds of that performance, amounting to about £300, as a gift to the hospital. When she visited Cracow in the height of her fame, she was engaged, for a very large sum, to sing in the theatre. When the amount was tendered her, she returned more than the half of it as a contribution towards the fund for erecting a statue to the memory of Kosciusko.

Her want of literary attainments, joined to her vivacity in conversation, sometimes produced ludicrous scenes. When at the court of Weimar, she was placed, at a dinner-party, by the side of Goethe, as a mark of respect to her on the part of her

During several seasons that Catalani remained at the King's Theatre, it was her policy (or rather

royal host. The lady knew nothing of Goethe, but, being struck by his majestic appearance, and the great attention of which he was the object, she inquired of the gentleman on her other side what was his name. "The celebrated Goethe, madame," was the answer. "Pray, on what instrument does he play?" was the next question. "He is no performer, madam—he is the renowned author of Werter."—"Oh, yes, yes, I remember," said Catalani; and, turning to the venerable poet, she addressed him,—"Ah, sir, what an admirer I am of Werter!" A low bow was the acknowledgment for so flattering a compliment. "I never," continued the lively lady,—"I never read any thing half so laughable in all my life. What a capital farce it is, sir!"—"Madam," said the poet, looking aghast—"the Sorrows of Werter a farce?"—"Oh, yes; never was anything so exquisitely ridiculous!" rejoined Catalani, laughing heartily as she enjoyed the remembrance. And it turned out that she had been talking all the while of a ridiculous parody of Werter, which had been performed at one of the minor theatres of Paris, and in which the sentimentality of Goethe's tale had been unmercifully ridiculed. The poet did not get over his mortification the whole evening; and the fair singer's credit at the court of Weimar was sadly impaired by this display of her ignorance of the illustrious Goethe and the Sorrows of Werter.

Kelly, in his *Reminiscences*, says of Catalani,—"I could relate numberless traits of her goodness; no woman was ever more charitable or kind-hearted, and as for the quality of her mind, I never knew a more perfect child of nature. At Bangor she heard the Welsh harp for the first time. The old blind harper of the house was in the kitchen; thither she went, and seemed delighted with the wild and plaintive music which he played. But when he struck up a Welsh jig, she started up

that of her husband) to allow no other star to appear in the firmament. The public were enraptured with her vocal powers and various attractions; and, provided that they saw and heard her, everything else became a matter of indifference. People no longer thought of going to the theatre to see a good opera well represented, or to hear the music of a good composer: Catalani was the sole object of curiosity and interest. It is not surprising that the shrewd M. Valabreque turned this infatuation to account. If Catalani was the single object of attraction, she was the only person entitled to recompense; and if the public crowded, not to see operas, but to hear her, other performers were superfluous. During her first season, there were several good performers—Siboni, Rovedino, and Naldi; the first an excellent tenor, and the others good basses. But, when Catalani came to make her engagement for the second season, her husband demanded a sum so extravagant, that the manager represented that such a salary to one singer would absolutely disable him from procuring any other performer of talent. "Talent!" said M. Valabreque, "have you not Madame Catalani? What would you have? If you want an opera company, my wife, with four or five

before all the servants in the kitchen, and danced as if she were wild. I thought she never would have ceased. At length, however, she finished; and, on quitting the kitchen, gave the harper two guineas."

puppets, is quite sufficient."* During the season of 1808, accordingly, Catalani actually was the whole company, the other performers being literally puppets. She appeared chiefly in operas, composed expressly for her, in which the part for the *prima donna* was carefully adapted to the display of her various powers. Her *Semiramide*, in particular, made an extraordinary impression on the public. The part afforded room for the finest tragic action, and the music, though it was nothing in itself, enabled her to exhibit all the wonders of her voice and execution. Her famous scena in the last act, "Son regina," will never be forgotten by those who heard it. She appeared also in some comic operas, (particularly *La Frascatana* of Paesiello,) in which she delighted the public by the graceful lightness and gaiety of her comedy. But in them, as well as in her tragedies, she stood alone; the whole attraction being centered in herself.

This system succeeded for a time: but the public gradually became weary of seeing and hearing nobody but Catalani; and, before the end of the second season, she often performed almost to empty benches.

The following season, M. Valabreque, not discouraged by this falling off, made a demand of so

* "Ma femme et quatre ou cinq poupées—voilà tout ce qu'il faut." Such, it is said, were the precise words of the knowing Frenchman.

exorbitant a nature, that the manager refused to comply with it. Tramezzani, a tenor-singer of reputation, was engaged, and appeared with success; but the company was bad, and the performances wretched. In 1810 the manager was fain to have Catalani on her own terms, along with Tramezzani; and these two singers, performing the ephemeral productions of the day, drew large audiences.

The music of 1811 was of a very superior quality to that of many previous seasons. Catalani was still the principal singer, but no longer the undivided object of attraction. There were, besides, Madame Bertinotti, with Tramezzani and Naldi. This season was memorable for the first performance in England of a comic opera of Mozart. Though that illustrious composer had been dead for almost twenty years, only one of his operas (*La Clemenza di Tito*) had as yet been performed in England, and that only some five or six times, at long intervals. Madame Bertinotti had the taste and spirit to bring out *Cosi fan tutte* for her own benefit: and though it was by no means well got up, yet it was received with delight by the public, and its production formed a new era on our Italian stage. Catalani, who ought to have been the *Fiordiligi*, did not appear in it; and Bertinotti's voice and execution were not equal to the two bravura airs in that part, which, accordingly, she omitted, substituting for them things that were easier. Similar expedients were adopted to cover the defects of the other

performers. The success of this opera induced Naldi to bring out, for his benefit, the *Flauto Magico:* but the strength of the company was quite inadequate to this difficult piece; the audience could make nothing of it, and it had only two representations.

Such was now the taste for the music of Mozart, that in the following season (1812) Catalani herself was constrained to give way to it. She appeared in two of his operas; as Vitellia in *La Clemenza di Tito*, and as Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro;* and personated, with equal felicity, the arch and lively waiting-woman, and the lofty and impassioned patrician dame of ancient Rome. She sang the music exquisitely; and neither character, probably, has ever had so charming a representative. Our countrywoman, Mrs. Dickons, was engaged to perform the character of the Countess Almaviva; and this highly-gifted singer (who had long held a most distinguished place on the English stage) rivalled Catalani in the excellence of her performance, and (in the duet "Sul aria" in particular) received an equal share of the applause of the audience. Tramezzani refused the part of Count Almaviva, on the ground that it was beneath his dignity to appear in a comic opera! Had he said that the music of the part was unsuitable to a tenor voice, he would have given a good reason for refusing a part that ought not to have been offered him. It was actually performed by Fischer, a good singer with a bass voice.

In the *Clemenza di Tito*, the part of *Sesto*, written for a *soprano* voice, was performed by Tramezzani; a great dramatic improvement, though unquestionably to the detriment of the music.

The year 1813 was the last season of Catalani's regular engagement on the opera stage. *Tito* and *Figaro* continued to be performed; but Catalani returned to the show-pieces of her favourite composers, entertaining the public, by way of novelty, with variations, composed for the violin, on popular airs, *God save the King*, *Rule Britannia*, *Cease your funning*, and other English songs, which were received by the public with the most extravagant marks of astonishment and delight. Towards the beginning of the season, she failed to make her appearance one evening on which she had been announced to perform. Another opera was substituted, and played in the midst of symptoms of irritation on the part of the audience, which, on the following evening (on which she was still absent) broke out into a violent uproar. Chandeliers were broken, musical instruments destroyed, and so much damage done that the house was shut up for a week. She had been induced by her husband to offer this piece of disrespect to the public, in consequence of her salary having fallen somewhat into arrear; nor, till this matter was put to rights, did she return to the theatre.

At the end of this season Catalani may be said to have abandoned the dramatic part of her pro-

fession, and entered upon a wandering life, in the course of which she visited all parts of Europe, exhibiting herself as a concert singer, and, wherever she went, astonishing the world by her amazing displays of vocal power. As soon as she had, in one place, exhausted her slender stock of things got up for exhibition, she removed to another; and wherever she went she was received with unexampled distinction. Persons of the highest rank vied with each other in their attentions to the wonder of the age. Princesses treated her as a companion, and crowned heads attended her with obsequious gallantry. The enormous sums which she received for her performances were augmented by the costly presents showered upon her by the great and the wealthy in every country which she visited; and she was probably much more richly rewarded for her extraordinary, but frivolous and unmeaning exhibitions, than even the most gifted of those who, by their legitimate efforts, have ennobled and extended their art. In the midst, however, of the most trying circumstances in which a beautiful and captivating woman could be placed, surrounded with all the dangers and temptations of such a flood of prosperity, she pursued her course with undeviating propriety. At all times her conduct was above suspicion, and not even the faintest breath of calumny has ever tarnished her fair fame.

After an absence of ten years, Madame Catalani returned to England in 1824, when she entered

into an engagement to perform at the opera-house for a certain number of nights. She appeared in Mayer's comic opera, *Il Fanatico per la Musica*, which she converted into a mere vehicle for her vocal displays. Almost all the music of her part was cut out, to make room for a series of her usual bravuras, and she did not think it worth while even to assume the semblance of representing a character, but walked on and off, and went through her songs as if she were alone, hardly appearing to acknowledge the presence of the "puppets" about her. The house was crowded in the extreme the first night, and her reception was enthusiastic. But M. Valabreque soon found that "ma femme et quatre ou cinq poupées" would no longer do. The days of Pucitta and Portogallo had passed away, and the public required, in an opera, concerted music well executed by all the principal performers. After the *Fanatico per la Musica* had been murdered a few times to audiences getting thinner and thinner every succeeding night, Catalani withdrew from the theatre, and never again, we believe, appeared on the stage.

Catalani's almost unrivalled gifts of nature, both mental and physical, ought to have raised her to a greater height as an artist than she ever attained. Her education was extremely superficial, and she became the object of universal admiration as a singer, without ever having become a musician. She never acquired any exalted notions of the ob-

jects of her art. As she advanced in her career she deviated farther and farther from the right road, till at length her whole ambition lay in surprising the world by displays of vocal power. It was no matter how unmeaning or preposterous these displays were; it was quite enough if they were astonishing. Had she remained upon the stage, and assiduously cultivated the dramatic part of her profession, such was her intelligence, her sensibility, her gaiety,—such were the powers of her voice, her sense of the beautiful, and the irresistible charms of her person, that she might have been the greatest actress that the musical drama ever possessed. But the wonder of the multitude was more flattering to her ear, and (it may be added) more substantial in its results, than the approbation of the judicious; and the latter part of her career was spent in mere exhibitions of vocal strength and agility, bearing the same relation to genuine art that the feats of Madame Saqui on the tight rope bear to the exquisite movements of Taglioni. In seeking for the means of making these displays, it was no matter to her how unsuitable her songs were to a female vocalist. One of her favourite performances was the martial song for a bass voice, "Non più andrai," in Figaro, in which it was her delight to bear down and overpower, by the force and volume of her organ, the whole brazen instruments of the orchestra; an achievement for which she was always rewarded by the acclamations of wondering crowds. It was these crowds—these acclamations—this sense-

less admiration, which unfortunately turned aside this highly-gifted being from the path to the summit of greatness in her art, and rendered her a beacon, rather than a model, to her successors.

The opera season of 1816 is worthy of notice, from the appearance of Madame Vestris and Madame Fodor.

Madame Vestris is the grand-daughter of the celebrated Bartolozzi, the engraver; and, at this time, was the wife of Armand Vestris, one of the dancers of the King's Theatre. She was then very young, but of exquisite beauty, and already possessed of those dramatic talents, those graces of attitude and action, and that fine contralto voice, which still continue to charm the public. She performed the parts of *Zaira* and *Proserpina* in a manner worthy of their original representative, Grassini herself; and she evinced her comic powers by her delightful representation of Lilla in *La Cosa Rara,* and Susanna in *Figaro;* and whether in the serious or comic opera, her singing was equally characterised by truth of expression and Italian purity of style. Madame Vestris remained only two seasons on the opera boards, and has since been occasionally engaged for short periods; but it is on the English stage that she has gained her great popularity.

In 1817 a spirited attempt was made by Mr. Ayrton, to whom the management of the King's Theatre had been committed by Mr. Waters, the then proprietor, to effect some important reforms

in its administration: and this gentleman, though he failed in his immediate object, produced a great and permanent benefit, by the impulse he gave to the public taste. He was aware that the obstacles to the production and proper performance of the best operas arose, not from the public, but from the performers themselves, whose arrogance and caprice were permitted to over-rule the proceedings of the manager. It was the object of Mr. Ayrton to break through the trammels of singers and dancers, and, by the uncontrolled exercise of his own judgment and taste, to present the public with the masterpieces of the great German as well as Italian composers. For this purpose he engaged one of the most efficient companies that had ever been assembled on the opera stage. The principal singers consisted of Madame Camporese, Madame Fodor, and Signors Crivelli, Ambrogetti, Naldi, and Angrisani. Madame Pasta was also engaged, and appeared this season; but she was then (though married) a mere girl, and made no impression on the public, though she discovered talents which gave promise of her subsequent greatness.

Madame Camporese had never before appeared on the stage. She was a lady of birth and education, and married to a member of the noble Roman family of Giustiniani, but constrained by family misfortunes to make use professionally of her musical accomplishments. Before her arrival in England she had sung only at the concert spirituel (or

oratorio) at Paris. She was a handsome and elegant woman, with dark eyes, hair, and complexion; and her fine Roman countenance fitted her especially for the performance of serious and dignified characters. As an actress she was not very impassioned or powerful, but always judicious and correct. Her voice was a soprano of good quality and compass; and her style and execution were refined, polished, and free from ambitious display.

Madame Fodor was little known before her appearance at this time in England. Her education, however, had been in the best school; and her beautiful and flexible voice, the lightness and delicacy of her execution, and the simplicity, animation, and tenderness of her manner as an actress, raised her at once to the height of public favour. She remained in England only during the seasons of 1816, 1817, and 1818; but has since attained the highest reputation in France, Italy, and Germany.

Signor Naldi had been an eminent lawyer at Bologna, but had been obliged to abandon the profession in consequence of the political convulsions of the period. He was a well-educated and very accomplished man. He remained several years in England, where he was deservedly a great favourite. In 1821 he met his death at Paris, in a very strange and tragical manner. One day, before dinner, at the house of his friend M. Garcia, the celebrated singer, he was showing a method of

cooking by steam, with a portable apparatus for that purpose; when, unfortunately, the lid of a stewing-pan, blown off by an explosion of steam, struck him on the head, and killed him on the spot.

Ambrogetti, though by no means distinguished for his vocal attainments, was possessed of a degree of genius and enthusiasm, with a versatility of dramatic talent, which raised him to a high rank in his profession. He was highly esteemed as an actor during his residence in England, which continued for several years. Of his subsequent history, little seems to be known. It has been said that, soon after his departure for England, he was induced by religious motives to retire from the world, and enter the monastic order of La Trappe.

With this excellent company the manager brought out, for the first time in England, the *Don Giovanni* of Mozart, a piece already well known to, and earnestly desired by, the real amateurs of music. Its impression on the public was instantaneous. It was performed twenty-three times during the season to overflowing audiences, and each night was hailed with acclamations. Such was the enthusiasm it excited, that it might have have been performed, night after night, without intermission; but the manager produced also the *Figaro* and *Clemenza di Tito* of Mozart, the *Penelope* of Cimarosa, the *Agnese* and *Griselda* of Paer, and the

Molinara of Paesiello ; a variety of excellence unparalleled in any other season, either before or since.

Ambrogetti, who performed the character of *Don Giovanni* with unequalled truth and spirit, exhibited a still greater degree of power in his representation of the distracted father in Paer's *Agnese*, the story of which is that of Mrs. Opie's *Father and Daughter*. It is said that, in order to qualify himself for this part, he had studied the various forms of insanity in the cells of bedlam ; but unfortunately, in seeking to render his representation true, he made it too dreadful to be borne. Females actually fainted, while others endeavoured to escape from so appalling a picture ; and, after a few nights, the performance of this opera was discontinued. Ambrogetti's tremendous exhibition was injudicious and unnecessary, as has been proved by the equally natural and pathetic but much softer delineation of the character which has since been given by Tamburini.

Though the efforts of the manager were rewarded by the fullest approbation of the public, yet he found himself unable to continue them. During the whole season he had to contend with the opposition of the performers, who were too often supported by their aristocratic patrons, and by the proprietor of the theatre, in their cabals, intrigues, and refusal to perform their duty. Finding it im-

possible to make head against such obstacles, Mr. Ayrton, at the end of the season, retired from the management : and, it is proper to add, after the most splendid and profitable season that had been known for many years, was forced to have recourse to an action at law for the remuneration due to himself for his services.* This season was attended with a great effect on the English musical stage. The popularity now gained by the operas of Mozart, especially *Don Giovanni* and *Figaro*, suggested their production in an English dress. They were accordingly arranged by Mr. Bishop in a form suited to the capacity of our native performers, and in this form attracted crowds in every theatre of the kingdom. Thus originated the practice of adapting to our stage the principal works of foreign composers, which has since been carried to such an extent, and has had such an influence on our national opera.

The season of 1811 was remarkable for the introduction into this country of the music of Rossini, through the means of Signor Garcia, who made his debût, in England, in the character of Count Almaviva in the *Barbiere di Siviglia*.

* The report of this action, which appeared in the public journals of the time, is curious as giving a peep behind the scenes of an Italian opera-house ; and a fuller view of the same kind is to be found in Mr. Ebers's entertaining little book, called *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*.

Rossini was then, at the age of twenty-six, in the height of his celebrity. Besides several other operas, he had produced his *Tancredi*, and the *Barbiere di Siviglia*, both of which were now received with enthusiasm in every Italian theatre throughout Europe. The latter drama is the same with that which had been previously set by Paesiello, and the brilliancy and spirit of Rossini's music immediately laid that of Paesiello on the shelf, to the great mortification, it is said, of the veteran *maestro*, whose opera, however, contains some things, the grace and beauty of which have not been equalled by his successor. Rossini's opera was admirably performed, the principal characters being sustained by Garcia, Madame Fodor, Ambrogetti, and Naldi, and was received as it had been in all parts of the continent; and for a number of years Rossini's pieces obtained almost exclusive possession of our theatre, as they did of every other.

Rossini himself visited London in 1824, in consequence of an engagement at the opera-house, by which he was to act as director of the music, to superintend the performance of his own operas, and to compose a new one for the theatre. His wife was also engaged as principal singer. This lady had acquired great celebrity and a large fortune as a tragic actress and singer, and Rossini had lately married her at Naples. Most of his operas had

been previously performed here; and the public curiosity respecting him had been still further excited by the publication of Stendhal's memoirs of his life.

The most remarkable incidents in the life of Rossini have been so often repeated, that it would be superfluous to introduce them here; but his biographer's description of his course of life while rambling from place to place, bringing out in rapid succession the operas which raised him to celebrity, is not merely characteristic of himself, but gives a lively picture of the state of the Italian stage.

"After his success at Bologna," says Stendhal, "which is considered as the chief seat of Italian music, Rossini received offers from almost every town in Italy. Every manager was required to furnish his theatre with an opera from the pen of Rossini. The sum he generally received for an opera was a thousand francs, (40*l.* sterling,) and he generally wrote from four to five in a year.

"The mechanism of an Italian theatre is as follows. The manager is frequently one of the most wealthy and considerable persons of the little town he inhabits. He forms a company, consisting of a *prima donna*, *tenore*, *basso cantante*, *basso buffo*, a second female singer, and a third *basso*. He engages a *maestro*, or composer, to write a new opera, who has to adapt his own airs to the voices and capacities of the company. The *libretto*, or poem, is purchased at the rate of from sixty to eighty francs

(three or four pounds) from some unlucky son of the Muses, who is generally a half-starved abbé, the hanger-on of some rich family in the neighbourhood. The character of the parasite, so admirably painted in Terence, is still to be found in all its glory in Lombardy, where the smallest town can boast of five or six families with incomes of three or four hundred a year. The manager, who, as has been already said, is generally the head of one of these families, entrusts the care of the financial department to a *registrario*, who is generally some pettifogging attorney who holds the situation of his steward. The next thing that generally happens is, that the manager falls in love with the *prima donna;* and the progress of this important amour gives ample employment to the curiosity of the gossips.

"The company, thus organised, at length gives its first representation, after a month of cabals and intrigues, which furnish conversation for the whole period. This is an event in the simple annals of the little town, of the importance of which the people of large places can form no idea. During months together, a population of eight or ten thousand persons do nothing but discuss the merits of the forthcoming music and singers, with the eager impetuosity which belongs to the Italian clime. This first representation, if successful, is generally followed by twenty or thirty more of the same piece; after which the company breaks up. This is what is called *stagione* or season; the last and

best of which is that of the carnival. The singers who are not engaged in any of these companies are usually to be found at Milan or Bologna, where they have agents, whose business it is to find them engagements, or to manœuvre them into situations when opportunity offers.

"From this little sketch of theatrical arrangements in Italy, some idea may be formed of the life which Rossini led. From 1810 to 1816 he visited in succession all the principal towns in Italy, remaining from three to four months in each. Wherever he arrived, he was received with acclamations, and entertained by the *dilettanti* of the place. The first two or three weeks were passed among his friends, dining out, and shrugging up his shoulders at the nonsense of the *libretto* given him to work upon. At length, about three weeks before the first representation, having acquired a competent knowledge of the voices of the performers, he begins to write. He rises late, and passes the day composing, amid the conversation of his new friends, whose politeness will not suffer them to leave him a moment. The day of performance is fast approaching, and yet he cannot resist the pressing invitations of these friends to dine with them at the tavern. This, of course, leads to a supper; the champagne circulates freely; the hours of morning steal on apace. At length a compunctious visiting shoots across the mind of the truant composer. He rises abruptly; his friends

insist on seeing him home; and they parade the silent streets bareheaded, shouting in chorus whatever comes uppermost, perhaps a portion of a *miserere*, to the great scandal and annoyance of the good Catholics in their beds. At length he reaches his lodgings; and, shutting himself up in his chamber, is at this, to every-day mortals most ungenial hour, visited by some of his most brilliant inspirations. These he hastily scratches down on scraps of paper, and next morning arranges them, or, in his own phrase, *instruments* them, amidst the same interruptions as before. At length the important night arrives. The *maestro* takes his place at the pianoforte. The theatre is overflowing, people having flocked into the town from ten leagues' distance. Every inn is crowded, and those who are unable to find accommodation are encamped round the theatre in their various vehicles. All business is suspended, and during the performance the town has the appearance of a desert. The passions, the anxieties, the very life of a whole population, are centered in the theatre.

"The overture commences; and so intense is the attention, that you may hear the buzzing of a fly. On its conclusion there is a perfect uproar: it is either applauded to the skies, or hooted without mercy. It is not in Italy as in other countries, where the first representation is seldom decisive, and where vanity or timidity prevents each man from expressing his individual opinion, lest it

should be found at variance with that of the majority. In an Italian theatre, people shout, scream, stamp, belabour the benches with their sticks, as if they were possessed. At the close of each air the same uproar is renewed; the roaring of a tempestuous sea could give but a faint idea of its fury.

"Such, at the same time, is the tact of an Italian audience, that they at once discern whether the merit of an air belongs to the singer or the composer. The cry is either, 'Bravo, David! Brava, Pisaroni!' Or the theatre resounds with 'Bravo, maestro!' Rossini then rises from his place at the piano with a very grave countenance, an unusual thing with him;—he makes three bows, which are followed by rounds of applause, mingled with brief and energetic phrases of approbation. When this is over, the piece proceeds.

"Rossini presides at the pianoforte during the three first representations; after which, he receives his thousand francs, is invited to a grand farewell dinner given by his friends, that is to say, by the whole town, and then he sets off by the diligence, with his portmanteau fuller of music-paper than of other effects, to begin a similar course in some other town fifty miles distant. It is usual for him to write to his mother after the three first representations, and to send her and his aged father two-thirds of the little sum he has received. He sets off with ten or a dozen sequins in his pocket, the

happiest of men, and doubly happy if chance throw in his way some ridiculous fellow-traveller whom he can make game of. On one occasion, as he was travelling from Ancona to Reggio, he passed himself off for a musical professor, a mortal enemy of Rossini, and amused himself with singing the most execrable music possible to the words of his own best airs, to show his superiority to that animal Rossini, whom ignorant pretenders to taste had the folly to extol to the skies."

This and other accounts of the far-famed *maestro* had stimulated the public curiosity to witness his appearance in the orchestra of the King's Theatre, which took place on the 24th of January, the first night of the season, when his own opera of *Zelmira* was performed for the first time. Every part of the house was crowded. When Rossini entered the orchestra, he was received with loud plaudits, all the persons in the pit standing on the seats to obtain a view of his person. He continued for a minute or two to bow respectfully to the audience, and then gave the signal for the overture to begin. He appeared stout, and rather below the middle height, with rather a heavy air, and a countenance which, though intelligent, betrayed none of the vivacity which distinguishes his music: and it was remarked that he had more the appearance of a sturdy beef-eating Englishman than a fiery and sensitive native of the south.

Zelmira, which had been originally brought out

at Naples two years before, was by no means successful when now performed in London. The *libretto*, written, as well as several other of Rossini's pieces, by Tottola, who appears to have belonged to the class of *poets* described by Stendhal in the passage above quoted, is exceedingly feeble and absurd, though the music has great merit, and contains some of the composer's happiest efforts. Madame Rossini did not gain the favour of the public, notwithstanding the beauty of her face and figure, and the greatness of her style both as an actress and a singer. But being no longer in the bloom of youth, she was pronounced *passée* both in person and voice, and so coldly received that, after appearing a few nights, she withdrew, and never again appeared on the stage.

After this failure Madame Catalani was engaged, and made her appearance for a few nights, but (as has been mentioned) with little success. Madame Pasta then appeared in several of Rossini's principal operas, and was the chief support of the theatre till it closed. The season was attended with enormous loss; and Rossini left England without having produced the opera which formed part of his engagement. His visit to this country, however, was a profitable one to himself. His brilliant reputation, pleasing manners, and vocal talents, made him the idol of the fashionable world; and he reaped a golden harvest from the extravagant sums given him for appearing at private musical

parties, and from the profits of subscription concerts at Almack's rooms. Since that time he has resided chiefly at Paris, and has composed two or three operas, only one of which, *Guillaume Tell*, written for the French stage, is worthy of his name.

Rossini is entitled to a very high rank as a dramatic composer. Now that the tide of fashion is ebbed, and he begins to be looked upon as belonging to the past, and not the present time, it is found that though a number of his inferior productions have passed away, yet his great works stand higher than they even did at first in the estimation of musicians: and it may be concluded that *Tancredi*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Otello*, *La Gazza Ladra*, *Mosè in Egitto*, *La Donna del Lago*, *Semiramide*, and *Guillaume Tell*, will probably keep possession of the stage much longer than the productions of the Italian composers who are the fashionable favourites of the day.

CHAPTER XIV.

Madame Pasta—Velluti—Mademoiselle Sontag—Madame Malibran—Present Italian performers—Present State of the Italian Opera.

Madame Pasta, whose juvenile debût in 1817 had been unnoticed, made a powerful impression when she re-appeared in 1824. During the greater part of the interval she had spent her time, not upon the stage, but in retirement and the assiduous study of her art. She returned to the stage in 1822, and chose Paris for the place of her second debût; and such was her success, that her re-appearance in London was preceded by a brilliant reputation. Even then she was only four-and-twenty. She was below the middle stature, but finely proportioned, with a noble head and beautiful features. The serious cast of her expressive countenance, and the simple majesty of her air, indicated a genius and disposition for the highest walk of tragedy. Her voice was a *mezzo soprano*

of a rich and sweet quality and extensive compass, but apparently very liable to external influences, which frequently impaired its clearness and flexibility: and to the same cause may be ascribed an uncertainty in her intonation, which, though not perceptible in her earlier years, has been distressingly remarkable in her later visits to this country.

Madame Pasta appeared on our opera stage almost every season from 1824 to 1833. Her range of characters was limited. The principal parts which she performed were, *Desdemona*, *Tancredi*, and *Semiramide*, in Rossini's operas; *Romeo*, in Zingarelli's *Romeo e Giulietta;* Paesiello's *Nina;* and Mayer's *Medea.* In all these characters she exhibited tragic powers of the highest order, and a command over the passions and sympathies of the audience which has rarely been equalled, and probably never surpassed, by the greatest tragedians of any age or country. She was what a musical performer ought to be, but is so very seldom—a complete impersonation of the character she assumed. We thought not of admiring the great vocalist; we even forgot that it was Pasta who stood before us, while we were thrilled with horror by the frenzy of the desperate Medea, or wept for the sorrows of the love-lorn Nina. Madame Pasta, though still in the period of life when the physical and intellectual powers are in all their vigour, appears to have finally withdrawn

from the stage: and of her it may well be said, that

> "Take her for all in all,
> We ne'er shall look upon her like again."

Signor VELUTTI, the last singer of a class now extinct, the male *soprano*, appeared at the King's Theatre in 1825. A voice of this description had not been heard in England for thirty years; and this circumstance, along with Velluti's great celebrity on the continent, made his debût an occurrence of no common interest in the musical world. From the year 1805, when he first appeared at Rome at the age of seventeen, he had been received with enthusiasm not only at all the principal theatres of Italy, but also at Vienna, where the public admiration of him amounted to a rage—so much so, that his name was attached to articles of dress, and everything fashionable was said to be *à la Velluti*. The manner in which he had been spoken of by the lively biographer of Rossini, and the influence which his singing was said to have produced on that composer's manner of writing, added to the general curiosity.

Velluti appeared in Meyerbeer's beautiful opera, *Il Crociato in Egitto*, in the character of *Armando*, the christian knight, the part which he performed when this opera was originally brought out at Venice in the preceding year. We shall avail our-

selves of Lord Mount Edgecumbe's account of this appearance; this noble amateur, in addition to his unimpeachable taste and judgment, having had the advantage of being able to compare the impression produced by Velluti with those which he had received from the great singers belonging to this class—the Pacchierottis and Rubinellis—of a former day.

"I have now," says Lord Mount Edgecumbe, "to record an event which excited great curiosity in the musical world, and for a time was of considerable advantage to the theatre, closing the season with great eclat. This was the arrival of a male soprano singer, the only one left on the Italian stage, who has for many years, perhaps only from having no rival in his line, been looked upon as the best singer of his country. He came to this with strong and numerous recommendations, but under no engagement for the opera, and he had been here for some time before the manager dared to produce so novel and extraordinary a performer. No singer of this description had appeared here for a quarter of a century, so that the greater part of those who formerly were delighted with Pacchierotti, Marchesi, &c., were now no more, and a generation had sprung up who had never heard a voice of this sort, and were strongly prejudiced against it. His first reception at concerts was far from favourable; the scurrilous abuse

lavished on him before he was heard, cruel and illiberal; and it was not till after long deliberation, much persuasion, and assurances of support, that the manager ventured to engage him for the remainder of the season. Even then, such was the popular prejudice and general cry raised against him, that unusual precautions were deemed necessary to secure a somewhat partial audience, and prevent his being driven from the stage on his first entry upon it, which seemed to be a predetermined measure. At length the first appearance of Signor Velluti was announced to take place, on an unusual night, for his own benefit, granted him, it was said, on account of the great trouble he had taken (to use a theatrical phrase) in getting up the new opera; which indeed was true, for as he had a perfect knowledge of the stage, he entirely directed all the performances in which he took a part. As he had brought me a letter of introduction from a friend at Florence, and my curiosity was a good deal raised by the representation given me of his talents, I was induced once more to enter a theatre, and was present on that occasion. At the moment when he was expected to appear, the most profound silence reigned in one of the most crowded audiences I ever saw, broken on his entering by loud applauses of encouragement. The first note he uttered gave a shock of surprise, almost of disgust, to inexperienced ears; but his performance was listened to with attention and

great applause throughout, with but few audible expressions of disapprobation speedily suppressed. The opera he had chosen for his debût was *Il Crociato in Egitto*, by a German composer named Meyerbeer, till then totally unknown in this country. The music was quite of the new school, but not copied from its founder, Rossini: it was original, odd, flighty, and might even be termed *fantastic*,* but at times beautiful; here and there most delightful melodies and harmonies occurred, but it was unequal. Solos were as rare as in all the modern operas, but the numerous concerted pieces much shorter and far less noisy than Rossini's, consisting chiefly of duets and terzettos, with but few choruses and no overwhelming accompaniments. Indeed, Meyerbeer has rather gone too far into the contrary extreme, the instrumental parts being frequently so slight as to be almost meagre, while he has sought to produce new and striking effects from the voices alone. The first woman's part was filled by Caradori, the only singer left who could undertake it, Pasta's engagement having terminated; and her performance gave great satisfaction. Though from want of power

* These are not exactly the remarks that would now be made on the music of this opera, which is not considered either odd, flighty, or fantastic. But they are interesting as showing the impression which it made upon a refined and accomplished critic of the old school, who had been so long conversant with the masterpieces of a former age.

she is not to be ranked in the first line of prima donnas, it may truly be said she is without a fault. Her voice is sweet but not strong, her knowledge of music very great, her taste and style excellent, full of delicacy and expression. In a room she is a perfect singer. Her genteel and particularly modest manner, combined with a very agreeable person and countenance, render her a pleasing and interesting, though not a surprising, performer.* The young Garcia† also appeared to advantage in this opera.

"To speak more minutely of Velluti. This singer is no longer young, and his voice is in decay. It seems to have had considerable compass, but has failed (which is extraordinary) in its middle tones, many of which are harsh and grating to the ear. Some of his notes are still exquisitely sweet, and he frequently dwells on, swells, and diminishes them with delightful effect. His lower notes, too, are full and mellow, and he displays considerable art in descending from the one to the other by passages ingeniously contrived to avoid those which he knows to be defective. His manner is florid without extravagance, his embellishments (many of which were new to me) tasteful and neatly executed. His general style is the *grazioso*, with infinite delicacy and a great deal of expression, but never rising to the grand, simple, and dignified

* A most correct description of this charming singer.

† Afterwards Madame Malibran.

cantabile of the old school, still less to the least approach towards the *bravura*. He evidently has no other, therefore there is a great want of variety in his performance, as well as a total deficiency of force and spirit. Of the great singers mentioned before, he most resembles Pacchierotti in one only, and that the lowest of his styles, but cannot be compared to him in excellence. He is also somewhat like him in figure, but far better looking; in his youth he was reckoned remarkably handsome. On the whole, there is much to approve and admire in his performance, and I can readily believe that in his prime he was not unworthy of the reputation he has attained in Italy. Even here, under so many disadvantages, he produced considerable effect, and overcame much of the prejudice raised against him. To the old he brought back some pleasing recollections; others, to whom his voice was new, became reconciled to it, and sensible of his merits, while many declared that to the last his tones gave them more pain than pleasure. However, either from curiosity or real admiration, he drew crowded audiences, and no opera but the *Crociato* was performed to the end of the season."*

* It is no small recommendation of Lord Mount Edgecumbe's elegant book, that though he is (and with good reason) a "laudator temporis acti," his admiration of the great works and great performers of a former day has not rendered him unjust to the merits of the moderns. His opinions of the principal singers of

In consequence of Velluti's success, and his experience in theatrical affairs, he was, during the following season (1826) entrusted with the management of the opera-house. But he was no longer an object of attraction, and the theatre was supported almost entirely by the splendid performances of Madame Pasta. Public feeling, too, became adverse to Velluti, in consequence of charges of sordid and grasping conduct in the course of his management; and a dispute between him and the female chorus singers, which came to be decided in a court of law, gave the final blow to his popularity. While he was getting up an opera for his own benefit, a letter from him to the chorus singers was read to them in the green-room by the chorus-master, promising them a guinea each in addition to their salaries if they performed their parts well. The opera was performed, and the male choristers received their guinea each, but not the females, who, after ineffectual attempts to obtain payment, at length asserted their claim in the Middlesex county court. Velluti's defence was, that his promise had been made only to the men;

our own time, those to which his readers can apply the test of their own observation, are marked with so much liberality, taste, and discrimination, as to induce a conviction of the soundness of such of his judgments as cannot now be subjected to a similar test. His descriptions of Catalani, Camporese, Pasta, Velluti, and Braham, may be considered as vouching for those of Rubinelli, Pacchierotti, Marchesi, and Banti.

in support of which he referred to the terms of his letter, which began, "Signori Coristi," or, in other words, "Gentlemen choristers;" and he added that he did not know of the ladies being engaged in the choruses in question, this having been done contrary to his wish and express direction. It was replied, that the phrase "Signori Coristi" was addressed to the choristers in general, and that the chorus-master, in reading the letter to them in English, interpreted it "Ladies and gentlemen;" and further, that Velluti could not have been ignorant of the employment of the ladies, as he superintended the rehearsals of the choruses, in which, moreover, female voices were indispensably necessary. The magistrate gave judgment in favour of the claimants, observing that Signor Velluti had brought forward "a trumpery defence." This trial, which was reported at length in the newspapers, excited great amusement, particularly from the shrewdness and spirit with which one of the young women pleaded her own cause and that of her companions. At the end of the season Velluti performed to empty houses, till the theatre was abruptly closed. He immediately left England, and, we believe, withdrew entirely from the stage.

The appearance of Mademoiselle SONTAG, in April 1828, excited extraordinary interest, from the celebrity which this young singer had acquired on the continent. She is a native of Prussia, and

made her debût at Berlin, where she created a sensation quite unexampled. It was not merely admiration and delight which she inspired, but a degree of enthusiasm which manifested itself, whenever she appeared, in the most extravagant demonstrations of rapture. The Prussian public seemed to have fallen deeply in love with the fair siren; and the passion was not without its usual attendant jealousy: for, when her admirers found that, tempted by some other engagement, she was about to leave them, they vented their spleen in very unequivocal marks of resentment, accompanied by a show of preference for a rival singer. She was obdurate enough, however, to leave them; and, after a brief sojourn in Paris, where she was the object of scarcely inferior idolatry, she arrived in London. The reports of her personal charms, her matchless talents, her irresistible fascinations of every kind, had wound up public curiosity to the highest pitch; and her first appearance as Rosina in the *Barbiere di Siviglia* drew together one of the most crowded audiences ever assembled in the King's Theatre. Such highly-raised expectations could not fail to be injurious to her, however great her merits. The audience sat in breathless suspense, preparing to be dazzled by the effulgence of a second goddess of love, and to be "lapt in elysium" by sounds of more than human beauty; and could hardly persuade themselves that the pretty and simple-looking girl who stood before them,

and sang "so sweetly and so well," and yet so like a mere mortal, was the all-peerless Sontag. Her vocal exertions, nevertheless, were much applauded, though less than they deserved; and the public disappointment was apparent in the disparaging remarks of the diurnal critics, by one of whom she was compared to an English nursery-maid. She speedily, however, got over the effects of this unfavourable re-action, and came to be looked upon as a pretty and engaging young woman, a pleasing actress, and a finished and accomplished singer. She was then about one-and-twenty; of the middle stature, and round and plump in her figure, with beautiful hands and arms, and a foot not unworthy of the admiration it had met with. She had light hair, a fair complexion, and blue eyes, which made her altogether very English-looking. She had a pretty mouth, embellished with a fine set of teeth, and a sweet and good-humoured countenance, though her features were by no means striking, and incapable of strong expression. Her demeanour was artless, unaffected, and ladylike, and her whole appearance exceedingly attractive. As a singer she had high claims to admiration. She had an extensive soprano voice, not remarkable for volume or power, but clear, brilliant, and singularly flexible; a quality which seems to have led her (unlike German singers in general) to cultivate the most florid style, and even to follow the bad example set by

Catalani, of seeking to convert her voice into an instrument, and to astonish the public by executing the violin variations on Rode's air, and other things of that stamp. In singing Rossini's music she indulged in the utmost luxuriance of embellishments; but, in doing so, she always showed herself a good musician, never falling into the common fault of florid singers—that of introducing ornaments at variance with the style of the air or the harmony of the accompaniments. It was observed, too, that, when she sang the music of Mozart or Weber, she restrained the exuberance of her fancy, and respected the purity of the composer's text. She did not display, either in her action or in her singing, any greatness of conception or depth of feeling, and she therefore failed in tragic and impassioned parts; but in the walk of light and elegant comedy, whether as an actress or a singer, she has rarely been excelled.

Mademoiselle Sontag, at the close of a successful season, left England, and did not return. She would no doubt have done so, and have received an undiminished welcome, had she continued her theatrical career. But her marriage with Count Rossi removed her to a higher sphere, which she continues to adorn by her talents and virtues.

The next remarkable occurrence in our opera annals was the appearance of Madame Malibran, in the beginning of 1829, in the full splendour of her wonderful powers. She had previously ap-

peared, four years before, in the *Crociato in Egitto* and the *Barbiere di Siviglia;* but she was then a mere girl, and only gave a promise of her future excellence. She was the daughter of Garcia, the eminent tenor-singer, and was born at Paris in 1808. At eight years old she was brought to England, where she remained without intermission for eight or nine years, and thus acquired that knowledge of the English language which afterwards enabled her to make so great an impression on the English stage. Garcia was a man of a brutal temper, but a thorough musician. His treatment of his daughter was harsh and tyrannical, and his instructions were rendered a penance by his unkindness and even cruelty ; but she was indebted to them for the high cultivation of her genius, and for an extent and solidity of musical knowledge in which probably no vocal performer ever excelled her.

After her debût at the opera-house in 1825, she was prematurely engaged as one of the principal singers of the York Festival of that year, where she exhibited surprising ability, considering her youth and inexperience. She then went to America with her father, who carried with him a small company of performers, for the purpose of giving Italian operas in the United States. They commenced their performances at New York, and Mademoiselle Garcia appeared in several of Rossini's operas. The Americans were captivated with her voice, beauty, and vivacity ; but, except her father and

herself, the company was wretched, and the public, notwithstanding the novelty of the entertainment, soon discovered the inefficiency of the performers. The speculation accordingly failed, and Garcia fell into difficulties and distress. In these circumstances his daughter was induced to accept the hand of M. Malibran, a merchant and banker of reputed wealth, but more than double her age. The marriage was a most unhappy one. Malibran had either deceived her as to his circumstances, or they speedily changed. His affairs became involved; and after his wife had vainly endeavoured, by professional exertions, to retrieve them, he was made bankrupt and thrown into prison. In these circumstances Madame Malibran at once, and unsolicited, resigned for the benefit of his creditors the whole of the provision which had been made upon her by the marriage settlements; a noble act, which gave rise to strong manifestations of favour and approbation on the part of the American public.

A separation having taken place between her and this unworthy husband, Madame Malibran returned to Europe, and made her first appearance at Paris, in the beginning of the year 1828, in the character of *Semiramide*.

One of the Paris journals gives a graphic account of this debût. "The singer, at her entrance, was greeted with warm applause. Her commanding figure, and the regularity of her features, bespoke the favour of the public. The noble and dignified

manner in which she gave the first phrase, "Fra tanti regi e popoli," justified the reception she had obtained: but the difficult phrase, "Frema il empio" proved a stumbling-block which she could not surmount. Alarmed by this check, she did not attempt the difficult passage in the *da capo*, but, dropping her voice, terminated the passage without effect, and made her exit, leaving the audience in doubt and dissatisfaction. The prodigious talent displayed by Pisaroni in the subsequent scenes gave occasion to comparisons by no means favourable to Madame Malibran. On her re-entrance she was coldly received; but she soon succeeded in winning the public to her favour. In the andante to the air, "Bel raggio lusinghier," the young singer threw out such powers, and displayed a voice so full and beautiful, that the former coldness gave way to applause. Encouraged by this, she hazarded the greatest difficulties of execution, and appeared so inspired by her success that her courage now became temerity. Madame Malibran Garcia is only nineteen; she is just arrived from North America, where she has been precluded from profiting by any models of excellence, and therefore she requires that finish which can be learned only from experience, and by profiting by the counsels of sound criticism." From that time Malibran became the idol of the Parisian public. She appeared as *Desdemona*, *Rosina*, and *Romeo* in the *Romeo e Giulietta* of Zingarelli—characters as different from

each other as can well be imagined; and two of them, moreover, among the masterpieces of Pasta. It was remarked by a French critic, that "if Malibran must yield the palm to Pasta in point of acting, yet she possesses a decided superiority in respect to song." Since that time the superiority of Malibran to Pasta, in respect to song, became more and more evident; while, in respect to acting, though no vocal performer has ever approached Pasta in her own peculiar walk of terrible grandeur, yet none has ever surpassed Malibran in intelligence, originality, vivacity, feeling, and those "tender strokes of art" which at once reach the heart of every spectator. Her versatility was wonderful. Pasta, it has been truly said, is a Siddons; Malibran was a Garrick.

On the 21st of March, 1829, she appeared at the King's Theatre in the character of *Desdemona*, and was received with acclamations by the audience. During the season she performed all her principal characters with unvarying success, though her manner of personating two of them,—*Ninetta* in the *Gazza Ladra* and *Zerlina* in *Don Giovanni*,—gave rise to a good deal of controversy among the contemporary critics. She represented them as she imagined they would have been in real life—coarse country girls, with awkward demeanour and hoydenish manners. She thus made them ridiculous instead of being (as they were intended to be) interesting; one of them being the heroine of

a deeply pathetic story. Nor were these new readings justified on the score of adherence to dramatic truth. A country girl, even in real life, is not necessarily rude and boisterous; it is by no means rare to discover, in the humblest walks of life, an inborn grace and delicacy of nature's own implanting; and such assuredly is the model from which characters like Ninetta or Zerlina ought to be copied.

From this time to the end of her life, Malibran's career consisted of a series of unremitting exertions and unparalleled triumphs. The Italians appear at first to have looked a little askance on an artist who had achieved greatness without having breathed the air or been warmed by the sun of Italy. This was especially the case at Naples, where her reception (in the autumn of 1832) was so cold that the first intelligence of it represented her as having completely failed. But the Neapolitans, with the impetuosity of their country, speedily corrected their first mistake. "Madame Malibran's performance in this city," says an article from Naples in a musical journal of the day, "has been one continued and splendid triumph. At first the cognoscenti of Naples were inclined to question the justice of the unbounded praises which have been lavished on this astonishing songstress, and to receive her with *sang froid*, and weigh her pretensions with all the coolness of determined critics: but she had no sooner opened her mouth than all this was instantly

converted into an enthusiasm of applause and admiration, to which the oldest frequenters of the opera remember no parallel. For seventeen nights the theatre was crowded at double prices, notwithstanding the subscribers' privileges were on most of those occasions suspended, and although *Otello*, *La Gazza Ladra*, and pieces of that description, were the only ones offered to a public long since tired even of the beauties of Rossini, and proverbial for its love of novelty. But her grand triumph of all was on the night when she took her leave of the Neapolitan audience in the character of Ninetta. Nothing can be imagined finer than the spectacle afforded by the immense theatre of San Carlo, crowded to the very ceiling and ringing with acclamations. Six times after the fall of the curtain Madame Malibran was called forward to receive the reiterated plaudits and adieus of an audience which seemed unable to bear the idea of a separation from its new idol, who had only strength and spirits left to kiss her hand to the assembled multitude, and indicate by graceful and expressive gestures the degree to which she was overpowered by fatigue and emotion. The scene did not end within the walls of the theatre: a crowd of the most enthusiastic rushed from all parts of the house to the stage-door, and as soon as Madame Malibran's sedan came out, escorted it with loud acclamations to the Palazzo Barbaja,* and renewed their salutations as

* *Anglicè*, the house of Barbaja, the manager.

the charming vocalist ascended the steps." What followed shows how completely Malibran engrossed the attention of the public; for the piece performed after her departure, Donizetti's *Esule di Roma*, was received with the most frigid indifference, though it was a standing favourite at Naples, though Lablache made his first appearance in it after his return to his native city, and though Madame Ronzi di Begnis* performed the principal female character.

In 1833 Malibran appeared at Drury Lane in the part of *Amina*, in an English version of *La Sonnambula;* and drew crowds to the theatre, during a large part of the season, by her charming singing, and the deep interest she imparted to the character. She then returned to Italy, where she was as much idolised as before. In 1835 she was again in England for a short time, during which she excited an extraordinary sensation by her performance, at Drury Lane, of the part of *Leonora* in the English version of Beethoven's *Fidelio*.

In 1836 she obtained, in the law-courts of Paris, a regular divorce from M. Malibran. This man,

* Madame Ronzi di Begnis arrived in this country, with her husband, in 1821, and was greatly admired, during several seasons, while she remained on our opera stage, as an excellent singer and a delightful actress in the buffo style. After a long retirement from the stage she reappeared at Naples, and, at the time mentioned above, was a great favourite in that city. She appears, however, to have again withdrawn from the stage. Signor di Begnis, who is now resident in London, though not on the stage, is a buffo actor and singer of the first class.

soon after her return to Europe, hearing of her success in the French capital, had followed her thither, and demanded a share of her professional emoluments. This demand she properly refused to comply with. Malibran had obtained her hand by means of a deception; and she had, moreover, acquitted herself of any claim he might have had as her husband, by having voluntarily resigned, in favour of his creditors, the property which had been settled on herself. After being long persecuted by his unwarrantable demands, she at length got rid of them: and, on obtaining a dissolution of this ill-starred marriage, she was united to the celebrated violinist M. de Beriot.

During the summer of this year she again appeared at Drury Lane. She repeated her characters of *Amina* and *Leonora* with undiminished eclat; and, by the astonishing energy of her performance of the heroine in Balfe's *Maid of Artois*, mainly contributed to the great popularity of that opera. She had always been remarkable for the activity of her habits; but her professional efforts during this season excited the wonder, and even the alarm, of those who witnessed them. While engaged in her arduous theatrical duties, she sang at concerts almost daily, and very often gratuitously, (and she never exercised her talents more cheerfully and effectively than when conferring a favour on some brother or sister of the profession): and, after a day of unremitting exertion, she was to be found

singing at an evening party, or making herself the life and soul of a circle of her friends. Her custom of taking much exercise, on horseback or on foot, in the open air, with a lightness of heart which enabled her to enjoy simple and playful amusement, contributed to mitigate the effects of such fatigue and exhaustion. But they produced at length their inevitable consequences.

In September, 1836, she went to Manchester to fulfil her engagement at the musical festival of that town; and there, as will long be remembered, her enfeebled frame sank under her exertions. The following particulars respecting the sad catastrophe which robbed the musical world of one who was its chief grace and ornament, were given by a writer who was at Manchester when the event occurred.

"Those who were near the late lamented vocalist state the closing scene of her existence to have been melancholy in the extreme. Though the hand of death was on her, she would not spare herself, from a fear that she might be accused of capriciously disappointing her admirers. On her way to her last, or last but one performance, she fainted repeatedly, yet still adhered to her resolution. In the evening prior to the first day's performance at the collegiate church, she sang no less than fourteen pieces in her room at the hotel, among her Italian friends. De Beriot cautioned her against exerting herself, but Malibran was not to be easily checked in her career. She was ill on Tuesday, (the day of the first

performance,) but she insisted on singing both morning and evening. On Wednesday her indisposition was still more evident; but she gave the last sacred composition she ever sang, 'Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously,' with electrical effect; and on that evening, the 14th of September, her last notes in public were heard. It was in the duet with Madame Caradori Allan, 'Vanne se alberghi in petto,' from Mercadante's *Andronico*. Her exertions in the encore of this duet were tremendous, and the fearful shake at the top of the voice will never be forgotten by those who heard it. It was a desperate struggle against sinking nature; it was the last vivid glare of the expiring lamp; she never sang afterwards. The house rang with animated cheering; hats and handkerchiefs were waving over the heads of the assembly; but the victim of excitement, while the echoes were yet in her ears, sank exhausted after leaving the stage, and her vocal career was ended. She was bled, and removed home; and her agonising cries that night will not be erased from the memory of the writer of this article, who was within a short distance of the room in which she expired."

The greatness of Madame Malibran's genius, and the extent and variety of her attainments as an actress and a vocalist, may be gathered from this brief sketch of her splendid career. As a woman, she possessed, in an uncommon degree, the affec-

tion and esteem of those who knew her; and we speak from our own knowledge, as well as in accordance with the general voice, when we say, that few women have been more richly endowed with the highest virtues of the female character. Plunged at a tender age into circumstances of deep adversity, her sacrifices to integrity were heroic, and she remained wholly uncorrupted by the prosperity of her latter days. Her feelings retained their primitive warmth—her tastes their primitive simplicity. Notwithstanding the seductions of her profession, her pleasures lay in the occupations of domestic life, and in acts of generosity. Large as was the revenue which she derived from the exercise of her transcendent talents, it was as worthily employed as well deserved. Perhaps there never was an income earned by the exertions of a public performer—exertions which broke her constitution and brought her to an early grave—of which so large a portion "wandered, heaven-directed, to the poor." She was devoid of ostentation, and her beneficent deeds were known to few. But they were of daily occurrence, for they constituted the greatest happiness of her life. Living among the sons and daughters of pleasure, her only luxury was the luxury of doing good; and, in the midst of wealth, her only profusion consisted in beneficence. The regret felt by the world for the loss of an admired and cherished artist was unquestionably feeble compared with the

grief with which many an humble family lamented the untimely death of their benefactress.*

* The following traits, among many others, may serve to illustrate Madame Malibran's character. They are taken from the memoir of her which appeared in *The Musical World.*

A poor Italian chorus-singer in the King's Theatre, having lost his voice by a severe cold, applied to Madame Malibran for pecuniary assistance to enable him to return to his native country. Having ascertained the truth of his destitute condition, she gave him five sovereigns, telling him that his passage was paid to Leghorn, and from thence to his native place. The poor man, on hearing these glad tidings, exclaimed in the fulness of his heart, "Ah, madam, you have saved me for ever!"—"No," she replied with a benevolent smile; "the Almighty alone can do that. Pray tell nobody."

An Italian professor of music gave a concert in London the year before her death. He had engaged her to sing for him, on her usual terms of twenty guineas. The concert was very thinly attended, and was a loss to the poor musician. He called to pay her, or rather to offer her a moiety of her terms, which she refused to accept, saying she must have the full stipulated amount. The Italian doled it out very slowly; and when he had counted twenty sovereigns, looked up as if to ask if that would not do. "No—another sovereign," she said; "my terms are twenty guineas, not pounds." He put down the other sovereign, saying to himself with a sigh, "My poor wife and children!" Malibran took up the money; and then saying, with great earnestness of manner, "I insisted on having my full terms that the sum might be the larger for your acceptance," put the gold into the hand of the astonished professor, and hastily wiping a tear from her eye, hurried out of the room.

She performed an act of the same nature when at Venice. The proprietor of the Teatro Emeronittio had requested her to sing once at his theatre; "I will," answered she, "but on the condition that not a word is said about remuneration." The

Among the other performers who have appeared at the London opera-house during the last ten

poor man was saved from ruin. The character she took was *Amina;* she was visited by throngs, and the storm of applause lasted a full half hour. A vast multitude afterwards followed her home with expressions of boundless enthusiasm. The Teatro Emeronittio is now called the Teatro Garcia.

While she was at Milan, in the autumn of 1835, the news arrived of the death of Bellini, the composer. Affected by the premature loss of that clever musician and very amiable man, she set on foot a subscription for the purpose of paying a tribute to his memory. By her exertions the donations swelled to a considerable amount, and at the head of the list her own name appeared for twenty pounds.

M. de Beriot incurred great obloquy in consequence of having left Manchester immediately on his wife's death, instead of remaining to take care of her funeral, and accompany her remains to the grave. We are unwilling to revive the painful discussions which took place at the time; but a circumstance which produced so strong and general a sensation cannot be entirely passed over. The following extract of a letter, which appeared in the public journals, from Dr. Belluomini, the physician who attended her in her last illness, and the intimate friend of both husband and wife, gives an explanation which acquits M. de Beriot of the heartlessness laid to his charge; a heartlessness, we may add, which would have been strangely inconsistent with the whole tenor of his conduct towards her while living.

"It may have been wrong," says Dr. Belluomini, "to have acted as M. de Beriot did, according to the custom existing in England; but it cannot be wrong as a foreigner to have followed the custom established on the greater part of the continent. Besides, to every rule there is an exception. Poor De Beriot, who during nine days had almost neither slept nor ate, amidst the most poignant anxiety, found himself in such a state of depression of body and mind when his dear wife expired, that I

years, and before the arrival of those who form the present admirable company at that theatre, the most distinguished have been Madame Pisaroni,

prevailed on him to quit immediately a place where everything contributed to augment his trouble. He followed my advice, and I sent for Mr. Beale, his friend of three years' standing, to request him to take charge of everything necessary for the funeral. Mr. Beale, a merchant of Manchester, a very respectable and estimable man, undertook the charge, and gave an assurance that he would acquit himself of the commission with all the zeal the circumstances required. Poor Charles, almost beside himself, was only able to put his signature to a few lines of authority which Mr. Beale asked from him, and which were written by another gentleman. I saw that if De Beriot remained at Manchester, he would be dead there also, or fall into a dangerous sickness. This is the reason why, considering myself responsible for his life to his relatives, and seeing myself almost the only person capable of giving him any consolation, I determined to carry him away with me, and to send him as speedily as possible to Brussels, to seek consolation in the bosom of his family. If, then, to have quitted Manchester so soon were a reprehensible act, the blame must entirely fall on me. but in nowise upon De Beriot, who at that moment was too much depressed to examine coldly what would be the best course to take to please the English public. On his arrival at my house he instantly sent an order, that, after the performance of the ceremonies of the church, his wife should not be interred, because he was going to take measures to have the body transferred to Brussels."

Madame Malibran was interred at Manchester with every demonstration of respect and sympathy. But, in consequence of an application by her mother, who came to England for that purpose, permission was granted by the proper authorities to disinter her remains, which were re-interred by her husband in the church of the village of Lacken, near Brussels.

Mademoiselle Blasis, Madame Cinti Damoreau, Signor Donzelli, and Signor Zuchelli; all of whom, by their vocal and histrionic talents, acquired a large share of public favour.

For the last four or five seasons, the boards of the Italian theatres, both of London and Paris, have been occupied by a company, which during that time has undergone little change, and which, taken collectively, is of unprecedented strength and efficiency. Its members are the *élite* of the Italian vocal performers of the present time: and though each of them may have been rivalled, or excelled, by some of their predecessors, yet so much talent of the highest order has probably never before been concentrated in one theatrical corps. At the time we write, this splendid assemblage consists of Madame Giulietta Grisi, Madame Persiani, Madame Albertazzi, Signor Rubini, Signor Tamburini, and Signor Lablache:* artists whose names and characters are familiar to every musical reader of the present day, and whose history it will belong to some future writer to record.

The Italian opera, both in England and France, receives a greater share of public support, and forms the habitual amusement of a larger portion of the community, than it seems ever to have done

* M. Ivanoff, though not at present a member of the London company, is entitled to be set down as one of the stars of this brilliant constellation.

at any former time. In this sense of the word the Italian opera is in a flourishing state : but, viewing its situation with reference to the quality of the present productions of the Italian musical stage, it is anything but flourishing. The pre-eminence so long maintained by Rossini, whose pieces for a series of years held almost exclusive possession of the Italian stage, appears to have checked the growth of original genius, and to have rendered his successors merely his imitators; and, as usual with imitators, they have been much more successful in imitating his peculiarities of manner, and even his faults, than his beauties. They have copied, and even exaggerated, the loud and boisterous style of instrumentation adopted by him in his later works, without being able to imitate the admirable effects produced by his skill in combination, and his thorough knowledge of the powers and properties of instruments. He was occasionally clumsy, crude, and incorrect in his harmonies, from the haste and carelessness of an impetuous temperament. They habitually combine their voices and instruments in a way which, in an earlier day, would have been held disgraceful to a tyro, from their shallow and superficial knowledge of their art. As an emphatic proof of this, it may be observed, that no Italian composer since Rossini has been able to produce a single opera overture which has been thought worthy to be transferred to the concert-room : and so much do they seem to

feel their inability to stand this test of their skill as artists, that they have given up writing overtures altogether, thus depriving the opera of what has always been a beautiful and interesting feature.

Such, we will venture to predict, is the light in which the fashionable Italian composers of the day—Pacini, Mercadante, Bellini, Ricci, Donizetti, and others—will be viewed before many years shall have elapsed. Their works, especially those of Bellini,* contain graceful melodies; but their airs in general are of a trivial and commonplace character, and have derived their popularity from the exquisite manner in which they are sung by the favourite performers who have just been mentioned. Concerted pieces, like those of Mozart and Rossini, in which a busy and animated dialogue is blended with beautiful combinations of harmony, and embel-

* Bellini, who died in 1835, at the age of six or seven-and-twenty, excited an interest derived more from his amiable character and untimely death, than from any great superiority of genius. His first opera, *Il Pirata*, composed when he was very young, gave a promise which his subsequent efforts did not fulfil, for it is the best of his operas. The attraction of *La Sonnambula*, (as anybody who has ever seen it may have observed) lies in the interest excited by the poor girl's perilous descent. Feeble prettiness is the characteristic of the music. *I Puritani* affords Madame Grisi room for that touching representation of the mind of a young girl, full of hope and happiness, crushed and blighted in a moment by sudden calamity, which is perhaps her finest display of dramatic talent. Her polacca, "Son vergine vezzosa," is a pretty piece of execution, akin to Catalani's variations on "Rode's air," or "O dolce concento."

lished by a rich and varied instrumental accompaniment, are never met with in the works of these composers; but, in place of them, we have a succession of meagre and monotonous choruses, in which the shouts and screams of the singers are drowned by the deafening and incessant accumulalation of all the noises that can be produced from the orchestra.

The poetry, too, of the Italian opera is at a low ebb. After a perusal of most of the pieces which have acquired celebrity during the present century, we have not found one which is worthy of notice as a literary work. So little value is attached to the dramatic portion of a musical piece, that it is seldom thought worth while to attach to the *libretto* (as it is called) the name of its author, who is generally a hanger-on or dependent upon some musical theatre—a sort of playwright of all work, ready to manufacture, to order, anything that may be wanted—a person who is not only destitute of reputation and importance, but is an object of ridicule and contumely to managers, composers, and performers.* Among these authors, doubtless, there are men who do not belong to this despicable class; but none of them appear to have attained any con-

* See the account of an Italian opera poet in the passage from Stendhal's *Vie de Rossini* quoted *antè*, page 388. See also the scene between Rossini and the *poeta* Tottola, the author of the libretto of *Mosè in Egitto*, described in the same work, chapter xxvi.

siderable degree of literary distinction.* Where a modern Italian opera, whether serious or comic, is possessed of any dramatic merit,—such as *Agnese*, *Tancredi*, *La Gazza Ladra*, *Il Pirata*, or *L'Elisir d'Amore*, it has generally been taken from some foreign (chiefly French or English) drama or romance; and its merit will be found to consist in the borrowed incidents and situations, not in the workmanship of the Italian playwright. Indeed the present form of the Italian opera is more unfavourable to dramatic excellence than it has ever been before. The eternal introduction of noisy choruses, not, as formerly, in situations only where groups of people could be supposed to be assembled with propriety, but in almost every scene, and mingling their vociferations with the most private transactions of the characters, renders the construction of a rational drama absolutely impossible.

On the modern Italian stage, in short, the music is everything, the drama nothing. The principles so philosophically developed, and so beautifully illustrated by Gluck, have fallen into oblivion; and it is only in the co-operation of a second Gluck with a second Calzabigi that we can hope for the restoration of the Italian musical drama.

* The most esteemed Italian musical dramatists of the day seem to be Signor Rossi and Signor Romani.

CHAPTER XV.

The English opera since the time of Arne—Linley—Sheridan —*The Duenna*—Linley's operas—Jackson—Mrs. Crouch—Dr. Arnold—Dibdin—Shield—Storace—Billington, Mara, Incledon, Braham, Kelly, and other vocal performers—Bishop —Adaptations of foreign operas—Recent English operas—Vocal performers—Present state of the opera.

Dr. Arne was succeeded by several dramatic composers, who appeared nearly about the same time, and flourished till almost the close of the last century. Linley, Jackson, Arnold, Dibdin, and Shield, were the men of genius who threw lustre over this period of our musical history.

The music of *The Duenna*, which first raised Thomas Linley into notice as a composer, was produced by him late in life, after his daughter, Eliza Linley, the celebrated "Maid of Bath," had become the wife of Sheridan, the author of the drama. Linley passed the earlier part of his life as a musical professor at Bath, where he conducted the oratorios and concerts then carried on in that

city ; and he was residing there when his daughter's marriage with Sheridan, attended with such romantic circumstances, took place.

When Sheridan wrote *The Duenna*, he called in the aid of his father-in-law as the composer of the music. Everything relating to this admirable opera is interesting ; and we shall therefore extract from Moore's *Life of Sheridan* a few passages from the letters written by the dramatist to the composer, while the piece was in preparation to be brought out at Covent Garden theatre.

In October, 1775, a few weeks before the opera was performed, Sheridan wrote to Linley : " We received your songs to-day, with which we are exceedingly pleased. I shall profit by your proposed alterations, but I'd have you to know that we are much too chaste in London to admit such strains as your Bath spring inspires. We dare not propose a peep beyond the ankle on any account ; for the critics in the pit at a new play are much greater prudes than the ladies in the boxes. Betsy intended to have troubled you with some music for correction, and I with some stanzas ; but an interview with Harris to-day has put me from the thoughts of it, and bent me on a much more important petition. You may easily suppose it is nothing else than what I said I would not ask in my last. But in short, unless you can give us three days in town, I fear our opera will stand a chance to be ruined. Harris is extravagantly sanguine of

its success as to plot and dialogue, which is to be rehearsed next Wednesday at the theatre. They will exert themselves to the utmost in the scenery, &c., but I never saw any one so disconcerted as he was at the idea of there being no one to put them in the right way as to the music. He entreated me in the most pressing terms to write instantly to you, and wanted, if he thought it would be of any weight, to write himself. Is it impossible to contrive this? Could not you leave Tom [Thomas Linley, the composer's son] to superintend the concert for a few days? If you can manage it, you will really do me the greatest service in the world. As to the state of the music, I want but three more airs, but there are some glees and quintets in the last act, which will be inevitably ruined if we have no one to set the performers at least in the right way." He continues to urge Linley to come to London; and there is a postscript by Mrs. Sheridan; "Dearest father, I shall have no spirits or hopes of the opera, unless we see you.—ELIZA ANN SHERIDAN."

Linley having signified his intention of not coming to London till the music was put in rehearsal, Sheridan, in several subsequent letters, gives him a number of hints and suggestions respecting the music, which show much taste and knowledge of theatrical effect. It is very interesting to observe, from the opera as it stands, the use that was made of them by Mr. Linley. It will be remarked, that

Sheridan was anxious that the music should be *melodious*, and that it should be *dramatic*.

"My intention," says Sheridan, in one of the letters, "was to have closed the first act with a song, but I find it is not thought so well. Hence I trust you with one of the enclosed papers; and at the same time you must excuse my impertinence in adding an idea of the cast I should wish the music to have; as I think I have heard you say you never heard Leoni, and I cannot briefly explain to you the character and situation of the persons on the stage with him. The first (a dialogue between Quick and Mrs. Mattocks) I would wish to be a pert, sprightly air; for though some of the words mayn't seem suited to it, I should mention that they are neither of them in earnest in what they say. Leoni takes it up seriously, and I want him to show himself advantageously in the six lines beginning 'Gentle maid.' I should tell you that he sings nothing well, but in a plaintive or pastoral style; and his voice is such as appears to me always to be hurt by much accompaniment. I have observed, too, that he never gets so much applause as when he makes a cadence. Therefore my idea is, that he should make a flourish at 'shall I grieve thee,' and return to 'Gentle maid;' and so sing that part of the tune again. After that, the two last lines, sung by the three, with the persons only varied, may get them off with as much spirit as possible. The second act ends with a *slow* glee, therefore I should

think the two last lines in question had better be brisk, especially as Quick and Mrs. Mattocks are concerned in it. The other is a song of Wilson's in the third act. I have written it to your tune, which you put some words to, beginning 'Prithee, prithee, pretty man.' I think it will do vastly well for the words: Don Jerome sings them when he is in particular spirits; therefore the time is not too light, though it might seem so by the last stanza—but he does not mean to be grave there; and I like particularly the returning to 'O the days when I was young!' We have mislaid the notes, but Tom remembers it. If you don't like it for words, will you give us one? but I must go back to 'O the days,' and be *funny*. I have not done troubling you, but must wait till Monday."

In his next letter Sheridan says:—"Sunday evening next is fixed for our first musical rehearsal, and I was in great hopes we might have completed the score. The songs you have sent up of 'Banna's banks,' and 'De'il take the wars,' I had words for before they arrived, which answer excessively well; and this was my reason for wishing for the next in the same manner, as it saves so much time. They are to sing 'Wind, gentle evergreen,' just as you sing it, (only with other words,) and I wanted only such support from the instruments, or such joining in, as you should think would help to set off and assist the effect. I enclose the words I had made for 'Wind, gentle evergreen,' which

will be sung as a catch by Mrs. Mattocks, Dubellamy, and Leoni. I don't mind the words not fitting the notes so well as the original ones. 'How merrily we live,' and 'Let's drink and let's sing,' are to be sung by a company of *friars* over their wine. The words will be parodied, and the chief effect must arise from their being *known;* for the joke will be much less for these jolly fellows to sing anything new, than to give what the audience are used to annex the idea of jollity to. For the other things Betsy mentioned, I only wish to have them with such accompaniment as you would put to their *present* words, and I shall have got words to my liking for them by the time they reach me. I want Dr. Harrington's catch, but as the sense must be the same, I am at a loss how to put other words. Can't the under part ('A smoky house, &c.) be sung by one person, and the other two change? The situation is—Quick and Dubellamy, two lovers, carrying away Father Paul (Reinold) in great raptures, to marry them;—the friar has before warned them of the ills of a married life, and they break out into this. The catch is particularly calculated for stage effect, but I don't like to take another person's words, and I don't see how I can put others, keeping the same idea, ('of seven squalling brats,' &c.) in which the whole affair lies. However, I shall be glad of the notes, with Reinold's part, if it is possible, as I have mentioned.

"The enclosed are words for 'Wind, gentle

evergreen,' a passionate song for Mattocks, and another for Miss Brown, which solicit to be clothed with melody by you, and are all I want. Mattocks's I could wish to be a broken, passionate affair, and the first two lines may be recitative, or what you please, uncommon. Miss Brown sings hers in a joyful mood; we want her to show in it as much execution as she is capable of, which is pretty well; and, for variety, we want Mr. Simpson's hautboy to cut a figure, with replying passages, &c., in the way of Fischer's 'M'ami, bel idol mio,' to abet which, I have lugged in 'Echo,' who is always allowed to play her part."

The Duenna was performed for the first time on the 21st November, 1775, and its run was probably without a parallel in the annals of the drama. "Sixty-three nights," says Mr. Moore, "was the career of the *Beggar's Opera;* but the *Duenna* was acted no less than seventy-five times during the season, the only intermissions being a few weeks at Christmas, and the Fridays on every week;—the latter on account of Leoni, who, being a Jew, could not act on those nights."

The *Duenna* is partly a *pasticcio*, consisting of original music mingled with popular airs, glees, &c., adapted to new words; and it appears from the above passages in Sheridan's letters, that he himself had a hand in the selection and adaptation of the old music. Several of the original pieces were contributed by Thomas Linley, the composer's

eldest son. These were, the overture; the songs, "Could I each fault remember," "Friendship is the bond of reason," and "Sharp is the woe;" the duet, "Turn thee round, I pray thee;" and the trio which concludes the first act. These are all charming things, and do honour to the genius of a young musician, who, but for his untimely fate, would undoubtedly have achieved the highest triumphs in his art.*

The principal singing parts in this opera are among the least important in a dramatic point of

* Thomas Linley, at an early age, discovered so remarkable a genius for music, that his father gave him a careful education. After receiving the instructions of Dr. Boyce, he was sent to Italy to pursue his studies; and, while at Florence, became the intimate friend of Mozart, then a young musical student like himself. The great German, in after life, always spoke with affection and regret of his young English friend. In addition to the beautiful pieces which he contributed to the *Duenna*, Thomas Linley composed some new music for the *Tempest*, when it was revived at Drury Lane, consisting of a fine chorus of the spirits who raise the storm, and the airs "O bid your faithful Ariel fly," and "Ere you can say, come and go;" compositions quite worthy of being joined to the older music of Purcell and Arne. In 1778 he perished by an unhappy accident, at the age of two-and-twenty. While on a visit to the Duke of Ancaster at his seat in Lincolnshire, he was amusing himself, with some other young people, with sailing on a lake in the duke's grounds, when the boat overset; and Linley, who had reached the shore, lost his life in endeavouring to save some of his companions. This calamity threw his father into a brain fever, from which he recovered, but never regained his former health and spirits.

view. Don Carlos is a mere superfluity; and Donna Clara is an insipid personage, without the spirit of Louisa, her sister heroine. These two parts, accordingly, were performed by singers—Leoni and Miss Brown; the other principal characters being represented by Mrs. Mattocks, Mrs. Green, Quick, and Wilson, excellent comedians, but not professed vocalists. It has been all along an impediment to the improvement of the English opera, that our singers have not been actors, nor our actors singers.* Leoni, when the *Duenna* appeared, held the highest place as a tenor-singer on the English stage. He was a Jew, and first attracted notice by his singing in the synagogue in London, where people of the greatest distinction went to hear him; but he was afterwards, it is said, dismissed from the service of the synagogue because he sang in Handel's *Messiah*, and at the theatres. Of Miss Brown little is known; but she must have possessed considerable vocal ability, from her successful performance of the celebrated air, "Adieu, thou dreary pile," a difficult and very beautiful bravura, the execution of which has tried

* Among the many awkward shifts to which this circumstance has given rise, even at recent periods, was the device adopted in the English adaptation of Mozart's *Figaro*, of introducing a personage called *Fiorillo*, quite unconnected with the plot, and with nothing to do but to sing some of Count Almaviva's music, the Count's representative being unable to sing. Our vocalists, however, are improving as actors.

the powers of the principal female singers since her time.*

Soon after the appearance of the *Duenna*, Mr. Linley became a joint patentee of Drury Lane theatre, with his son-in-law, Mr. Sheridan, and consequently took up his residence in London. For several years he conducted the musical department of that theatre, and was induced, from the success of the *Duenna*, to continue his course as a dramatic composer. He produced, in quick succession, *The Carnival of Venice; Selima and Azor; The Camp*, written by Sheridan; *The Spanish Maid; The Stranger at Home; Love in the East;* and several works of lesser note. All these pieces gained popularity, especially *The Carnival*, and *Selima and Azor*, which is an adaptation of Gretry's *Zémire et Azor*, containing some charming music by Linley, and, among other things, the song, "No flower that blows," which still delights the lovers of English music. It may be added, that Linley composed the orchestral accompaniments to the songs in the *Beggar's Opera*, which have been always used since his time. He produced a great quantity of chamber music, consisting of songs, madrigals, elegies, &c.—beautiful specimens of the

* When two of our best theatrical singers at present, Wilson and Miss Romer, made their debût at Covent Garden, on the same evening, in October 1830, they appeared in the characters of *Don Carlos* and *Donna Clara*, which they performed with a success that established them in the favour of the public.

genuine English style, which, however, now meet with a neglect which is most discreditable to our national taste. He died in 1795.

William Jackson (the celebrated "Jackson of Exeter") wrote comparatively little for the theatre; but his principal dramatic piece, *The Lord of the Manor*, (written by General Burgoyne,) gained a very high degree of popularity; and several of the songs in this opera are still valued by those who love pure and expressive melody.*

The production of *The Lord of the Manor*, in 1780, brought into notice Mrs. Crouch, who made her debût in that opera. This distinguished actress and singer was the daughter of a Mr. Phillips, and was born in 1763, so that she made her first appearance at the age of seventeen. She immediately became a favourite of the public, and performed the principal characters in the *Beggar's Opera*, *Lionel and Clarissa*, *The Carnival of Venice*, and the other operas then in vogue.

In 1784, Miss Phillips went to Ireland, where her uncommon loveliness of person and captivating sweetness of manners attracted many admirers, and gave rise to some singular and romantic occurrences.

A young gentleman, whose passion for her rose to actual madness, not being able to gain her affec-

* The tender and beautiful air, "Encompass'd in an angel's frame," and "When first this humble roof I knew," are in *The Lord of the Manor*.

tions, endeavoured to terrify her into a return of his passion, by threatening to destroy both her and himself if she persisted in refusing him, and declared his determination to shoot her from the pit when she was on the stage, and then to shoot himself. The next night she was to perform, after she had heard this desperate resolution, she was told he was in the pit, and stationed near the stage. Officers were sent for, and the unfortunate young man was removed from the theatre. His family afterwards prevailed on him to leave the country.

She had another lover, who was heir to a title and a large fortune, and for whom his family, of course, had high matrimonial expectations. She listened to his addresses, and allowed herself to be prevailed on to marry him clandestinely. Accompanied by her brother and her maid, she went with her lover to the altar of a Roman Catholic chapel; but, when the young man declared his name, the priest refused to perform the ceremony without his father's consent. Another priest was tried, but also in vain; as the gentleman's name was so well known in Ireland that no priest would venture to marry him while he was under age. Thus disappointed, the lovers set off to a seaport town, intending to take their passage to Scotland; but they had to wait for some time till a vessel was ready to sail. When they were about to embark, the young man's father, accompanied by Mr. Phillips, arrived at the inn with a large body of attendants; and

the lovers were separated, never to meet again. This catastrophe was caused by Mr. Phillips himself, who appears to have been too honourable a man to permit his daughter to enter clandestinely into a family who would think themselves degraded by an alliance with an actress. He had observed the attachment which his daughter had formed; and, on discovering her elopement, conjectured who was her companion. He immediately went and communicated the circumstance to the young man's father, whom he also accompanied in pursuit of the fugitives. This unhappy occurrence deeply affected Miss Phillips's mind, and threw her into a state of melancholy, from which it was long before she recovered.

Some time afterwards she married Mr. Crouch, a lieutenant in the navy, a very handsome young man, of a gay disposition and expensive habits. The marriage was not a happy one, and after some years they separated by mutual consent. Mrs. Crouch continued to hold a principal place on our musical stage till within a short time of her death, which took place in 1805. Her vocal powers were not highly cultivated, nor was her musical knowledge great; but she possessed a voice of exquisite sweetness, much flexibility, and considerable extent. A natural delicacy and refinement of taste made up, in a great measure, for the deficiency of artificial polish; and her beauty and grace, with

the mingled spirit and sensibility of her manner, gave a charm to everything she did, which never ceased to captivate the public.

Dr. Samuel Arnold was an excellent as well as a voluminous composer for the theatre; though his pieces, many of which were hastily produced, are of very unequal merit. In 1763, when he was only about three-and-twenty, he was chosen as composer to Covent Garden theatre, for which house he wrote his earliest operas. In 1776 he was engaged by Mr. Colman to fill the same situation at the Haymarket; and, for many years, produced the chief musical pieces which were performed at that theatre. He was connected with the theatres, and continued to compose for them, till the end of his life; though he held several important situations, the duties of which he performed with equal attention and ability. He was for many years organist of the Chapel Royal, director of the concerts of ancient music, and organist of Westminster Abbey. He died in 1802.

Between 1765 and 1802 Arnold composed forty-three operas and other musical pieces. Many of these are trifling and ephemeral productions; but his principal works are calculated to secure to him a lasting reputation. Among these may be reckoned, *The Castle of Andalusia*, *Inkle and Yarico*, *The Battle of Hexham*, *The Children in the Wood*, and *The Mountaineers*. These pieces are all pos-

CHARLES DIBDIN ESQ.

sessed of dramatie merit. *The Castle of Andalusia* is written by O'Keefe, *The Children in the Wood* by Morton, and the others by thc younger Colman.

Charles Dibdin began to distinguish himself as a dramatie composer about the year 1768, whcn he produced the operas of *Lionel and Clarissa* (the music of which is partly original and partly seleeted) and *The Padlock.* He wrote for the stagc for more than twenty years, during which time hc produced more than a hundred operas and musical pieces of various kinds. His principal works arc *The Padlock*, *The Quaker*, and *The Waterman*, which are full of beautiful airs, the produce of a strong though uncultivated musical genius.

William Shield began to compose for the stage in 1778, when he produced the music of *The Flitch of Bacon*, a piece written by Sir Henry Batc Dudley. His best works were *Rosina* and *Marian*, two very bcautiful pastoral dramas, written by Mrs. Brooke, wifc of the Reverend John Brooke, rector of Colney in Norfolk, a lady of great talents and aeeomplishments; and *The Flitch of Bacon*, *The Woodman*, *The Farmer*, and *The Poor Soldier* (the two last written by O'Keefe) contain many bcautiful songs. Shield's music is not marked by force or energy, but it is perfeetly suited to the subjeets of his pieces, whieh are sweet and simplc pietures of rural life. His melodies, in style, charaeter, and adaptation to the aeeents of our native speeeh, are perfeetly English; though, in their

smoothness, grace, and refinement, they bear marks of the composer's intimate acquaintance with the Italian school. The air in *Rosina*, "Whilst with village maids I stray," is a brilliant and difficult bravura; and in *Marian* there is an air with an *oboe* accompaniment, of still greater extent and complication: and yet these airs are so natural and expressive, that they do not appear out of place even in the mouths of the village girls who sing them.

Shield died in 1829, at the age of eighty, after a life spent in the tranquil exercise of his art, and the exemplary performance of every social and domestic duty. As a musician, he is to be considered as one of the greatest ornaments of the English school;—equal to Arne, and inferior only to the unrivalled Purcell.

The operas of these contemporary composers, who were the immediate successors of Arne, are similar in form and structure. They are little dramas, generally of a comic cast, with a mixture of serious scenes, and frequently of considerable merit: their musical portion consisting of songs and duets, with occasionally a very slight introductory or concluding concerted piece or chorus.

The first decided step to the modern form of the opera was made by Stephen Storace, who, though a native of England, was of Italian parentage, and received the whole of his musical education in Italy. At a very early age he was placed in the

Conservatorio of St. Onophrio at Naples: and it was not till after he had finished his studies, and obtained some reputation both in Italy and Germany, that he came to England in 1787, at the age of twenty-four. Soon afterwards he obtained an engagement as composer to Drury Lane theatre, and commenced his short but brilliant career as an English musician.

His earliest production was an adaptation of the German opera of *The Doctor and Apothecary*, which contains some beautiful airs by him, not yet forgotten. But his first English opera was *The Haunted Tower*, brought out at Drury Lane in 1789. This admirable piece, which was written by James Cobb, had the utmost success. It was performed fifty times the first season; and not only established Storace's reputation as a composer, but introduced his sister, the celebrated Anna Storace, to the favour of the public as a vocalist. In 1790 the entertainment of *No Song no Supper*, written by Prince Hoare, was produced at Drury Lane, after having been at first rejected by the management of that opera. From that time his works appeared in quick succession during the few remaining years of his life. *The Siege of Belgrade* is an English version, by Cobb, of Martini's Italian opera, *La Cosa Rara*, in which a portion of the original music is blended with new compositions by Storace. *The Pirates* was written by Cobb;

and the music, with a few slight exceptions, is original. *Lodoiska* was translated from the French by John Kemble; and the music was selected from the two French operas of the same name by Kreutzer and Cherubini, with several new pieces by Storace himself.*

In March, 1795, *The Iron Chest*, written by Colman, with Storace's music, was performed at Drury Lane. His exertions in bringing out this piece cost him his life. Though labouring under ill health at the time, after having been confined to bed for many days, he insisted, notwithstanding the entreaties of his family, on being wrapped in blankets and carried to the theatre to attend the first rehearsal. The consequence was fatal; he returned to his bed, from which he never rose

* This opera, as well as the others which have been mentioned, was performed with great success. In the last scene a very natural and striking effect was produced by an accident which placed Mrs. Crouch in imminent danger, when she appeared in the blazing castle. The wind fanned the flames too near the place where she stood; and, though she felt their heat, she would not mar the effect of the scene by deserting her post. Kelly, who saw her danger, flew to her assistance, but, in his haste, his foot slipped, and he fell from a considerable height. Recovering himself, he caught her in his arms, and, scarcely knowing what he did, hurried her to the front of the stage. This excellent piece of acting, as the audience thought it, produced peals of applause; and the performers ever after endeavoured to imitate the manner in which they had involuntarily produced such an effect.

again, but expired a few days after the successful performance of the play, in the thirty-third year of his age.

Storace's education having been entirely Italian, his style was formed upon the works of the great masters of the Italian school: but having the advantage of a thorough acquaintance with the English language, his strong sense and judgment enabled him to unite pure Italian melody to the prosody and accent of English poetry with a felicity which has never been excelled by any other composer. His airs have the flowing smoothness and grace of Paesiello, while they are free from the slightest appearance of *outlandishness*—permitting the singer to deliver the words with perfect distinctness of utterance and propriety of pronunciation and emphasis. In this important particular the music of Storace may still serve as a model to English composers: for the Italian and German phrases, of which our vocal melody is now so full, are used with such disregard of the words to which they are joined, that our own vocalists, even when singing English music, appear like foreigners singing in broken and unintelligible English.

The operas of Storace have the further charm to a modern ear, that they are embellished with those beautiful concerted pieces and finales which he was the first to introduce upon the English stage. His orchestral accompaniments are light and elegant, in the Italian style of his day. And, upon

the whole, it certainly cannot be said that the neglect into which these charming pieces have fallen within these few years is any proof of the progress of our musical drama.

At the time of his death he was engaged in the composition of *Mahmoud*, written by Prince Hoare. He had engaged Braham (who had some time before appeared at Bath) for Drury Lane, and wrote the music of the principal vocal part, so as to exhibit the young singer's powers. He left the work in an unfinished state, but, with the assistance of Mr. Kelly, it was prepared for the stage, and performed, for the benefit of his widow and child, a few weeks after his death. It was completely successful, and had a great run. *Mahmoud*, considered with reference to its music, is probably the finest of Storace's operas. Beside the airs composed for Braham, and which are of extraordinary brilliancy and difficulty, it contains a great deal of music of a varied as well as beautiful kind: but the piece as a whole wants clearness of design, and is encumbered by too great a number of characters. Since its first run was over, therefore, it has been less frequently performed than the rest of Storace's principal operas.

For a number of years after the death of Storace, the stage was supplied, partly with the works of the composers who have been mentioned from Arne downwards, and partly by the ephemeral productions of Kelly, Reeve, Mazzinghi, Davy, Braham,

and others; none of whom have any claim, as composers, to a place in the records of music. The best of their pieces were merely agreeable trifles, which owed their popularity to a certain degree of prettiness in the airs, which were generally in the ballad style, and to the manner in which they were performed by the comedians and singers of that day. But still it is difficult to imagine how such jejune compositions could have satisfied a public who were not only familiar with the beautiful and expressive airs of a series of composers, from Arne to Storace, whose pieces were in full possession of the stage, but had learned, through the medium of Storace's operas, to enjoy the rich and harmonious concerted music of the Italian school.

Among the vocal performers of that day, Billington and Mara have already been mentioned. Mrs. Billington, after her return from the continent in 1801, appeared alternately at the theatres of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, to which she drew crowds by her performances in *Artaxerxes*, *Love in a Village*, *Lionel and Clarissa*, and other standard English operas; but she never appeared in any of the new pieces which were brought out. After that time Mrs. Billington sang at the Italian opera, the concerts, and provincial music-meetings, till her retirement in 1809. She died in 1817 at an estate which she possessed in the neighbourhood of Venice.

Madame Mara appeared with great success in

several English operas; and, in particular, exhibited the extraordinary versatility of her talents by the exquisite manner in which (notwithstanding her personal disadvantages) she performed the character of *Polly*. From the year 1784, when this great singer first came to England, she made this country her chief residence till she left it in 1802. Her career during this period was of almost unexampled splendour: in the church, the theatre, and the concert-room, her performances were listened to with unbounded admiration and delight. At the time of her departure from England in 1802, she was in the height of public favour. Her farewell concert produced above seven hundred pounds, and the audience testified their admiration and regret by repeated acclamations. Her subsequent life was very unfortunate. She purchased a property at Moscow, where she was living in retirement, when the invasion of Russia by the French, and the destruction of that city, in 1812, reduced her to poverty. Her Russian friends and patrons were dispersed; and she retired to Revel, where she was almost wholly supported by those who had known her in the days of her glory and prosperity. In 1819 she returned to London, where, with the view of improving her circumstances, she gave a concert in the Opera-house, which unfortunately not only failed in its object, but produced, on her part, a melancholy exhibition of the wreck of her once transcendent powers. She returned to Revel,

where she died in January 1833, in the eighty-fourth year of her age.

At the period above referred to, the celebrated INCLEDON was in the height of his popularity. As a musician he was almost uneducated, having spent a considerable part of his youth at sea; but he possessed a tenor voice of unrivalled beauty and power, and a genius which, with cultivation, would have raised him above every other English singer. He first appeared in London in the year 1790, in the character of *Dermot*, in *The Poor Soldier*, and at once established himself in public favour. The style in which he excelled was the English ballad, and his favourite characters were those of the operas in that style, such as *Macheath*, *Young Meadows*, *Belville*, &c. His action was clumsy and awkward, and his elocution coarse and vulgar; but, in singing, the effect produced by his voice, energy, and feeling, was irresistible. After enjoying, for many years, the unbounded favour of the public, he passed his latter days in retirement, and died at Worcester in February, 1826.

At the same period, Braham, in the vigour of his youthful but matured powers, divided with Incledon the general applause, and, in the opinion of the more discerning, enjoyed that supremacy as a singer which soon became undisputed, and which, to this day, he continues to hold. Leaving to his rival the older English ballad, Braham devoted his attention to a more modern style. His debût in London, in *Mahmoud*, a part composed expressly for him by

Storace, exhibited the extent and high cultivation of his voice, and the amazing brilliancy of his execution. His favourite parts were in operas by Mazzinghi, Reeve, and other composers of the day, and more especially by himself. And it was by the incomparable manner in which he sang the airs composed by himself, in *The Cabinet*, *The English Fleet*, *Kais*, and *The Devil's Bridge*, that these pieces acquired a degree of popularity to which, from their intrinsic merits, they had no pretension.

Michael Kelly was a favourite singer, and a prolific composer of the musical pieces of that day. It has been truly observed, that a joke of Sheridan's, which has been quoted ever since, has unduly depreciated Kelly's services to the music of the stage. When he embarked in trade as a wine-merchant, Sheridan proposed that the inscription above his door should be "Michael Kelly, composer of wine and importer of music." Kelly, though a shallow musician, had a highly cultivated taste. His own airs, though slight, are always elegant; and his knowledge of the Italian and German schools, not very general among the English musicians of his day, enabled him to enrich his pieces with many gems of foreign art. The popularity, therefore, of Kelly's numerous pieces had a very favourable influence on the taste of the public. As a singer, his powers were by no means great, bu t his intelligence, experience, and knowledge of the stage, rendered him very useful.

Among the female vocalists of that period were

Mrs. Crouch, Signora Storace, Mrs. Jordan, Miss De Camp, (afterwards Mrs. C. Kemble,) Miss Poole, (afterwards Mrs. Dickons,) and Mrs. Bland. Several of the comedians,—Bannister, Suett, Sedgwick, and others—were able to sing comic ballads agreeably, and contributed by this talent, as well as their acting, to the popularity of the musical pieces in which they appeared.

The excellence and popularity of the numerous works of BISHOP have contributed greatly to improve the English taste in vocal music. His genius was cultivated by a regular education under Bianchi; and his compositions afford evidence of an assiduous study and thorough knowledge of the great masters of the English school. Hence his music, from the very outset, presented a remarkable contrast to the flimsy productions to which the public had been accustomed. His first opera, *The Circassian Bride*, was produced with great success at Drury Lane, in February 1809; but, on the following night, the theatre was burnt to the ground, and the score of the new piece consumed in the flames. It laid the foundation, however, of Bishop's reputation. He immediately afterwards was appointed composer and director of the music of Covent Garden, for which theatre, we believe, the whole of his dramatic music has been written. *The Maniac* appeared in 1810. This opera, though probably the finest of his works, has been one of the least popular. The drama was found heavy, and the principal character is not a

very successful imitation of *Octavian* in *The Mountaineers*. Probably, too, the very excellence of the music was at that time no recommendation to it. The public did not sufficiently understand and appreciate the highly wrought choruses and concerted pieces, the fine orchestral combinations, and the depth and solidity which characterise this opera. Bishop, however, continued to write in this style, and certainly taught the public to admire it. The best of his subsequent operas, especially *The Virgin of the Sun*, *The Knight of Snowdon*, *The Miller and his Men*, and *The Slave*, are, in many respects, worthy of the greatest masters of the German school, and justify the title, which was bestowed on him, of "the English Mozart."

When the performance of *Don Giovanni*, and other operas of Mozart, at the King's Theatre made so great an impression in 1817, Mr. Bishop conceived the idea of adapting them to the English stage. Accordingly *The Libertine* (an English version of *Don Giovanni)* appeared at Covent Garden, and was followed by *The Marriage of Figaro*, and Rossini's *Barber of Seville*. These pieces were so mutilated, and so full of interpolations to suit what was then considered the taste of an English audience, that they gave but a faint notion of the originals. But the public was captivated by the graceful and beautiful strains of the great foreign masters, and by the charming manner in which they were sung by Miss Stephens. By introducing these

pieces to the frequenters of the English theatres, Mr. Bishop created a demand for foreign dramatic music, and gave rise to the practice which has prevailed ever since, of supplying the English stage, to a considerable extent, with the musical productions of Italy, Germany, and France.

The taste for foreign music, especially that of the German school, was prodigiously increased by the appearance, in an English dress, of the celebrated *Der Freischutz*. It was first performed, on 23rd July, 1824, at the English Opera-house, and received with acclamations. It was got up at both the great winter theatres, as soon as they opened; and in a short time it was performed, to crowded and enthusiastic audiences, in every theatre in the united kingdom. No dramatic production ever made a more sudden, a greater, or a more lasting impression on the public. Two of Weber's minor productions, *Abon Hassan* and *Preciosa*, were brought out during the following season. The first was successful, but the second failed entirely, in consequence, no doubt, of the weakness of the drama, (though it is founded on the interesting tale of Cervantes,) for the music is beautiful, and its romantic Spanish character shows the attention paid by Weber to what may be called musical costume in his compositions.

The immense popularity of Weber's name in this country led to his engagement to compose his opera of *Oberon* for Covent Garden. The drama;

which is founded on Wieland's poem, was written by Mr. Planché; and is one of the few instances of the dramatic part of a musical piece being worthy to employ the genius of a great composer. Weber arrived in London in February, 1826, in order to superintend the preparation of the piece; and it was performed for the first time on the 12th of April. In one of his interesting letters to his wife, written while the opera was in rehearsal, he gives his opinion of the performers. "And now, my dear love," he says, "I can assure you that you may be quite at ease, both as to the singers and the orchestra. Miss Paton is a singer of the first rank, and will play *Reiza* divinely. Braham not less so, though in a totally different style. There are also several good tenors, and I really cannot see why the English singing should be so much abused. The singers have a perfectly good Italian education, fine voices, and expression. The orchestra is not remarkable, but still very good, and the choruses particularly so. In short, I feel quite at ease as to the fate of *Oberon*."—On the night of its performance he thus described the result: "My best beloved Caroline, through God's grace and assistance I have this evening met with the most complete success. The brilliancy and affecting nature of the triumph are indescribable. God alone be thanked for it! When I entered the orchestra, the whole of the house, which was filled to overflowing, rose up, and I was saluted by huzzas and waving of hats

and handkerchiefs, which I thought would never have done. They insisted on encoring the overture. Every air was interrupted twice or thrice with bursts of applause."—"So much for this night, dear life," he adds in conclusion, "from your heartily tired husband, who, however, could not sleep in peace till he had communicated to you this new blessing of Heaven. Good night!"

Oberon had been carefully prepared, was splendidly got up, and (in its principal characters, sustained by Braham, Miss Paton, and Madame Vestris) admirably performed. Its reception was such as Weber described, and it is not surprising that it gave him such fulness of contentment. But he was little aware of the hollowness of much of the applause which a new piece receives in an English theatre. The excitement, a great deal of which was produced more by his name and his personal presence than by the excellence of his music, speedily subsided; and though *Oberon* continued to *run*, (as it is called,) yet the houses became thinner and thinner, the defalcation first becoming apparent in the boxes. Meanwhile the composer's lamented death took place on the 4th of June; and, on the 17th of the same month, when the opera was performed for the benefit of his widow and children, the proceeds scarcely cleared the expenses of the theatre. It was soon afterwards laid aside, and has never been revived. Its fate in Germany has been very different. It was

immediately brought out at Dresden, where Weber had lived, and received with an enthusiasm which attended its subsequent performance in almost every German theatre from Hamburgh to Vienna. And this enthusiasm has not yet subsided; the public flock to see it whenever it is performed, and wonder at the neglect it has met with in England.

At the same time that *Oberon* was brought out at Covent Garden, the rival theatre of Drury Lane produced *Aladdin*. This opera was composed under great disadvantages. The well-known and rather too familiar Arabian tale was but indifferently dramatised, and Mr. Bishop seems to have laboured under a feeling of the weight of his competitor, which apparently gave rise to a frequent but unconscious imitation of his style. The attention of the public, too, was for the moment wholly engrossed by Weber; and Bishop's opera, whatever might have been its merits, had no chance of attracting notice. After having been performed for a few nights, accordingly, it was withdrawn. As a whole, it was not to be compared to *Oberon;* but, had it not been forced into this comparison, the many beautiful things which it contains would have received greater justice from the public.

For several years after this time, the English musicians withdrew entirely from the field of dramatic composition, and the stage was supplied entirely by importations from abroad. To show the extent to which this was carried, we subjoin a

list of the principal foreign operas which were adapted to the English stage, and performed at Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and the English Opera-house, from 1827 to 1833, both inclusive; during which period no English composer produced a single musical piece of the smallest importance, their utmost efforts being limited to a few songs, occasionally introduced into some trifling farce or afterpiece.

The Interrupted Sacrifice: Winter's *Unterbrochene Opferfest.*
The Turk: Rossini's *Turco in Italia.*
The Seraglio: Mozart's *Entfuhrung aus dem Serail.*
The Freebooters: Paer's *Fuorusciti.*
Tit for Tat: Mozart's *Così fan tutte.*
The Pirate of Genoa: Weigl's *Amor Marinaro.*
Love in Wrinkles: a French piece by Fetis.
The Casket: a French piece, with music from Mozart's operas.
The Maid of Judah: the music from Rossini's *Semiramide.*
The Robber's Bride: Ries's *Rauberbraut.*
The Night before the Wedding: Boieldieu's *Les Deux Nuits.*
Masaniello: Auber.
The National Guard: Auber's *Fiancée.*
Ninetta: Rossini's *Gazza Ladra.*
William Tell: Rossini's *Guilleaume Tell.*
Cinderella: Rossini's *Cenerentola.*
Don Giovanni, newly adapted.
The Vampyre: *Marchner's Der Vampyr.*
Azor and Zemira: Spohr's *Zemire und Azor.*
The Emissary: Onslow's *Colporteur.*
The Love Charm: Auber's *Philtre.*
Fra Diavolo: Auber.

Robert the Devil: Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable,* brought out at the same time at both the winter theatres.

The Alchymist: the music from Spohr's operas.

During the last few years, however, the English composers have shown greater activity, and their exertions have been attended with success. Various operas, the productions of native talent, have been well received by the public, and have, to a considerable extent, occupied our musical stage; and the consequence has been, that the amount of importation from abroad has greatly diminished. Since the year 1833, not more than six or eight foreign operas have been performed in the English threatres. The principal of these was the *Fidelio* of Beethoven, in which the charming character of *Leonora* was performed, both by Madame Malibran and Madame Schrœder Devrient, in different styles, but with equal ability, though Malibran's thorough command of our language gave her an advantage over her German rival. *The Magic Flute* (Mozart's *Zauberflöte*) was lately carefully brought out, and, on the whole, well performed at Drury Lane; and the musical taste of the public was evinced by the numerous representations which this piece sustained, notwithstanding the disadvantage of a heavy and unintelligible drama. These two are the only foreign operas, the production of which, during several years, has made any impression on the public. The *Elisa and Claudio* of Mercadante,

the *Norma* of Bellini, the *Brazen Horse* of Auber, and the *Zampa* of Herold, were total failures.

On the other hand, Barnett's elegant opera, *The Mountain Sylph*, had an almost uninterrupted run of above a hundred nights, and is still frequently performed. Loder's *Nourjahad* was favourably received, and the music of Thomson's *Hermann*, which contains beauties of the highest order, was appreciated by the public, though the success of both these pieces was injured by their want of dramatic merit. The same cause prevented the success of several other productions, especially that of Barnett's *Fair Rosamond*, a work, musically speaking, of the highest class. It is, indeed, the *chef d'œuvre* of this gifted composer, and contains many things worthy of the greatest masters of the German school. The principal operas of Balfe, *The Siege of Rochelle*, and *The Maid of Artois*, have gained a popularity rarely surpassed. Rooke's *Amilie* has had a great run during the last season; and the favourable reception of *The Outpost*, an operetta lately produced by Hullah, augurs well for the future career of this young musician. All these circumstances confirm an observation which we have made in another place, and induce us to repeat it,—that "we do not know an instance of a foreign opera, produced in an English dress, having gained unmerited popularity, or of an English opera having suffered unmerited neglect."

Our theatrical singers deserve the favourable opinions which were entertained of them by Weber twelve years ago. They have "a good Italian education, fine voices, and expression;" and some of them have considerable dramatic talent; though in this respect, generally speaking, they are still deficient. Among them the most distinguished are, Mrs. Wood, (formerly Miss Paton,) Madame Vestris, Miss Romer, Miss Shirreff, Miss Rainforth, Mrs. Seguin, Mr. Braham, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Templeton, Mr. Phillips, Mr. Balfe, Mr. Seguin, and Mr. Giubilei. These performers, if united, as they ought to be, in one great theatre, dedicated, as in Paris, to the performance of the national musical drama, would be able to do justice to the works of the greatest composers; but, at present, no opera can be adequately performed while they are divided among all the theatres of the metropolis.

On the subject of the present state of the opera, in this as well as in other countries, it may be remarked in general, that, in proportion as the musical part of this entertainment has acquired an ascendancy, the poetical and dramatic part has declined; a fact which our readers must have gathered from the preceding narrative. "Whenever music aspires to the pre-eminence over poetry in a drama," says Metastasio, "she destroys both that and herself."—"Modern music," he adds, "has rebelled against poetry; and neglecting

true expression, and regarding all attention to words as downright slavery, has indulged herself, in spite of common sense, in every sort of caprice and extravagance; making the theatre no longer resound with any other applause than that which is given to displays of execution, with the vain inundation of which she has hastened her own disgrace, after having first occasioned that of the mangled, disfigured, and ruined drama. Pleasures which are unable to gratify the mind, or touch the heart, are of short duration; for though men may suffer themselves to be easily captivated by unexpected physical sensations, they do not for ever renounce the use of their reasoning faculties." What was the case in Italy, in Metastasio's time, is the case in England, as well as in Italy, now. Sense is sacrificed to sound. Music is degraded into a gratification of the ear, instead of being regarded as a language capable of exalting the sentiment, and deepening the passion of the drama. No man of genius will suffer his poetry to be made the vehicle for unmeaning sing-song; hence the opera is left in the hands of playwrights, and, with few exceptions, is looked upon by people of sense and reflection as a slight and frivolous amusement, unworthy of serious notice. What can show more clearly the false position in which the opera is placed than the practice of encores? An air or duet may be a soliloquy, or a dialogue of strong passion or deep in-

terest; and who, that enters ever so little into the spirit of the scene, would think of having such a soliloquy or dialogue over again? Who would call on Macbeth to clutch a second time the air-drawn dagger, or on his sleeping wife again to show the fearful workings of remorse in her distempered mind, because, in the one case or the other, the actor exhibited a fine piece of declamation? And yet there is hardly a tragic opera in which such absurdities do not pass current. Such absurdities, however, have not always passed current on the opera stage. What would Gluck have said, after the pathetic parting scene between his Orpheus and Eurydice, had they been called upon to go through it again, or had Orpheus been desired to recommence, for the gratification of the audience, his passionate lamentations for the loss of his beloved? Far from considering such an encore as a compliment, the great composer would either have reproached himself with the feebleness of his musical expression, or else set down the audience as greater brutes than those which Orpheus was able to move by the sound of his lyre. In regard to the performers, an encore, especially in an interesting and impassioned scene, if a compliment to the singer, is truly a reproach to the actor.

The restoration of the opera to its place as an important as well as a delightful branch of

the drama requires the co-operation of a musician possessed of sound views respecting the objects of his art, and capable of rendering all its resources subservient to the purposes of dramatic expression and effect, with a poet of congenial spirit, gifted with distinguished genius, and yet not afraid to commit himself by an association with a genius equal to his own. If it is supposed that music, by being thus employed as one of the dialects of the drama, will lose its own peculiar charms, that apprehension may be relieved by considering whether the music of the *Orfeo* of Gluck, the *Don Giovanni* of Mozart, the *Fidelio* of Beethoven, and the *Oberon* of Weber, is more or less beautiful then that of the *Straniera*, the *Anna Bolena*, the *Lucia di Lammermoor*, the *Parisina*, and the other pretty productions of the day. The dramatic pieces at present set to music by our composers are generally trash ; and our composers are aware that it is so, but say, in self-defence, that they cannot get anything better. But let them show that good poetry runs no hazard of being degraded or destroyed in their hands, and it can hardly be doubted that they will obtain it. As to our musical performers, they will perforce become actors as well as singers, when they find that good acting, as much as good singing, is essential to their success.

There is no want either of dramatic talent or

of musical talent in England. But it requires the co-operation of these two kinds of talent, in a degree which does not exist at present, to produce results which will be at all satisfactory to the growing taste and intelligence of the public.

THE END.

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